

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE6444

Purkis, Yenn

Summary

Born in Devon, Yenn Purkis migrated to Australia with their family in 1985, aged 11. Consistent bullying at school eroded their sense of self. The ramifications of this self-hatred had profound negative consequences on the choices they subsequently made, with time spent in prison, episodes in psychiatric wards, and a period of homelessness.

Diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's is a feminist issue. Yenn's diagnosis was delayed until their 20th year. It was a further 7 years until they came to terms with that finding. For Yenn, non-verbal communication and eye contact are difficult to this day. Although their feminist thinking was always tied to inclusivity, Yenn did not think of themselves as a feminist until in their 40's. Yenn now identifies as non-binary and uses the pronouns them/they.

Realising that many Autistic teens had low expectations of employment, Yenn wrote an activity book to prepare them for the workforce. Publication of their autobiography, in 2006, forced them to speak about autism beyond their personal experience. Further practical guides followed. A TED talk vastly increased their public exposure and demand for presentations at conferences grew. Their current wide range of contact points with the community are all manifestations of their leadership.

Yenn's motivation and motto is to leave the world a better place than it was when they got here.

Read an interview with Yenn Purkis in the online exhibition [Redefining Leadership](#).

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