

## July 2023

Hello! Welcome to my monthly posts! It's wonderful to connect with you in this space. I hope you don't have too much on your plate, as I look forward to serving you a slice of my life.

Please do subscribe if you haven't already. This will see my posts go straight to your inbox each month rather than waiting for a new one to appear on my website.

There's also an audio version where I personally deliver each post to your ears. A great option if you would prefer not to read or find it easier to listen in your spare time.



In each post, I'll include a rundown of what's happened over the month: where I've travelled to, some of the events I've spoken at, a few extra highlights, and a look at what I'll be doing the following month. I'll include photos too.

Think of it as a cross between a blog, newsletter, podcast and socials.... A blonnesocast? Hmmm, I think I'll stick to calling them posts for now, at least.

As you may be aware, I'm no longer on social media. I'm still on LinkedIn to stay connected with people I've worked with. And YouTube, which, by the way, I'm hoping to start sharing some new content on there soon. My other social accounts are still there, but I won't be active on them.

I always like to make it clear that I'm not in any way against social media. The decision to leave was quite a few years in the making.

I first started using social media daily at the end of 2017. I was 12 then and had just bought my first phone following a rise to fame after winning the Australian Poetry Slam, leading to my touring. I then began to investigate how I could have a positive impact and make a difference on my social channels. At the same time, I attended a media literacy conference, which was an experience that furthered my interest in the role media plays in social concerns and the way we interact with and view social concerns.

Over the next year, I started working with young people, mostly visiting schools to give talks and run workshops. Through regularly working with kindergarten to grade 12 students, I noticed the effect social media and screen time had on each age group. I saw the positives to social media that many people experience, but the younger the user, the more negatives and fewer positives there seemed to be.

I decided to do something about it. I looked for ways to improve young people's experience interacting with media, mainly social media. I teamed up with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, which, with funding from Google, created a Media Literacy Lab alongside many of the best journalists and media experts. The Media Literacy Lab became a pivotal resource for secondary school students, helping them to navigate the world of media, learning about everything from misinformation to trolling, and helping them to turn those negatives into positives. The Media Literacy Lab continues to make a difference today.

And then came a pandemic. Time spent online and on social media skyrocketed, as did the volume of news stories circulating. Although the pandemic is behind us, the record numbers of children and teenagers spending hours online and disconnecting from the real world is a forefront concern.

I decided to leave social media for several reasons. I personally enjoy spending as little time on screens as possible. And as I study and work online, most of my waking hours are spent on screens, which I've been working towards reducing.

I also left to be an example to the many young people who feel that social media is the only key that can open doors. I've met so many kids and teens who believe they won't be popular, liked or successful without an amazing social feed. As if having

friends and landing great jobs all require being across social platforms. You might be one of those people.

I want to demonstrate that there is another world outside of devices where opportunities still exist. And in abundance too.

If you're one of my lovely supporters over 30, you might think this is nonsense, and I wouldn't blame you for thinking that. Unfortunately, many young people know no other way, and who can blame them when devices have become our livelihoods.

I believe social media can be great for networking, making friends, learning new things, and entertainment, amongst other things; however, it wasn't designed for the developing mind, especially children.

## **A look at July**

July has been exciting as I prepare to start touring after a year off. I spent the last 12 months writing my fourth and fifth books. It's been a journey beyond anything I had expected, but I'm so glad to share new work with you soon!

My fourth book is almost complete, and it's safe to say it has been my biggest project... probably ever. I started working on my fourth book six years ago and have spent most of the past year putting it all together. I look forward to sharing more.

As I start visiting schools again, I'll have a co-presenter joining me! Cheese, an extra-large taco (yes, you read correctly), and I are heading to schools across Australia talking about how delicious tacos are and my latest book, *29 Things You Didn't Know About Me*.

## **Coming up next month**

To kick off August, I'll be at the Byron Bay Writers Festival from August 9th to 13th. I'm excited to be part of the school program, speaking to primary and high school students, and delivering a presentation at the Kids Big Day Out on Sunday, August 13th. I'll be sharing brand new performance poems that may or may not be part of a new collection, signing copies of my books, and Cheese will be making his debut appearance! Come down and say hi if you're in the area; it'll be great fun. [Click here if you'd like to learn more and get tickets.](#)