

Australian actor John Jarratt sues Daily Telegraph after jury throws out rape charge

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Veteran movie and television actor John Jarratt has announced that he is suing the *Daily Telegraph* and its celebrity journalist Jonathan Moran for defamation after being cleared of a rape charge by a Sydney court last month following a five-day trial.

Jarratt's accuser, whose name is the subject of a court suppression order, claimed the actor raped her early one morning, more than 40 years ago in 1976, when she was 19 and living in an eastern Sydney share house with the actor and his wife, Rosa Miano.

The woman did not report the alleged rape to police until November 2017, in the wake of lengthy discussions with Tracey Spicer, a former television journalist and self-appointed spokeswoman for the #MeToo movement in Australia.

From the outset, the now 66-year-old Jarratt, who was 23 when the rape was supposed to have occurred, denied the allegation and testified in a statement to police, and throughout his trial, that the sexual encounter with the woman was consensual.

Jarratt told the court that he had arrived home on the night of the alleged assault at about 11 p.m., not 3 a.m., as claimed by his accuser. He said that she had whispered to him across the hall in the house, invited him into her bedroom, and, after talking for a while, the two had sexual intercourse.

Jarratt, who appeared in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *Little Boy Lost* (1978) and *Australia* (2008) along with several popular local television series, is best known for his role in the 2005 cult thriller *Wolf Creek* and its various sequels.

The “not guilty” verdict is a powerful vindication for the popular actor and a significant blow against #MeToo's anti-democratic “trial by media” methods. The jury of five men and seven women took just over 15 minutes to unanimously reject the rape allegation against the veteran actor.

The Sydney hearing was, in fact, the first criminal court trial of a sexual assault charge against an Australian actor since the #MeToo movement and its corporate media allies began hurling untested and career-destroying claims of

“inappropriate” sexual behaviour against actors and entertainers.

The rape accusations against Jarratt were made public in mid-November 2017 by the *Daily Telegraph*, which published a front page story headlined “Wolf Creek star in rape claim.” The sensationalist article was accompanied by a photograph of Jarratt as Mick Taylor, a violent serial killer in the cult thriller.

The *Telegraph* story, which specifically referred to the #MeToo allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, was published even before the police force formally announced that it was investigating the rape accusation. Jarratt, who was not charged until August 2018, 10 months later, has not worked in the entertainment industry since the newspaper's allegations. If found guilty, he could have been jailed for up to 14 years.

On the same day as the *Telegraph's* spurious claims, Tracey Spicer told the media that she had the names of 65 male sexual predators, many from the entertainment industry, and would expose them. She was given wall-to-wall coverage of her claims that sexual assaults were taking place on an “industrial scale” in Australia.

In his testimony to the NSW District Court, Jarratt said the first time he heard about the rape allegation was in November 2017, when his agent phoned and said that the *Telegraph* was publishing a story about it the next day.

His female accuser appeared in court via video-link. She claimed to have been awoken in her bed at about 3 a.m. by the fully-clothed Jarratt, who pulled back the bedcovers, violently ripped off her underwear and t-shirt, pinned her down and raped her while holding his hand over her mouth.

Asked by Jarratt's lawyer, Greg James QC, to explain why she waited for more than four decades before contacting police about the violent sexual assault, the woman declared that there was “no rhyme or reason,” but then insisted “I didn't think the police would believe me.”

Under cross-examination, the alleged victim confused the year the assault was supposed to have occurred, and confirmed that she had shared a convivial breakfast with

Jarratt and his wife Miano the day after the alleged rape. She continued living in the house for some time after the incident, and maintained friendly relations with the family for about a decade.

She also told the court that eight years later—after Jarratt and Miano had separated—she contacted Miano and said Jarratt had raped her. Miano rejected this allegation in her testimony, saying that the woman had never mentioned “rape,” but had described the sexual encounter with Jarratt as a “one-night stand.”

Jarratt’s accuser categorically denied in the court that she had contacted the actor in Cairns, north Queensland, ten years after the alleged rape, where he was appearing in a film.

Presented with a photograph of her attending the film’s end-of-shoot party, she changed her story and admitted that she had initiated the contact and had used Jarratt’s name to gain entry to the event. Jarratt’s lawyer pointed out that the woman’s attendance at an end-of-shoot party, where the actor who allegedly raped her was present, was unusual.

After the trial, defence barrister and head of Jarratt’s legal team, Chris Murphy, told the Nine Network’s “60 Minutes” program that the allegations against his client “should have been terminated on the first day” and that he had “never seen a more undeserving [and] weak case.”

Jarratt was an innocent man, Murphy said, but after being subjected to an anonymous smear had faced “a monstrous situation.”

Sydney defence lawyer Greg Walsh told the television program that even though the actor had been found not guilty, he had faced “an ordeal by fire, which is not going to stop.”

Walsh condemned the #MeToo movement and other organisations that “brand all men as sexual offenders [and] encourage women to believe that all men are sexual offenders... If people in an ideological sense are encouraged to believe that anybody charged with sexual assault must be guilty, then that’s a very dangerous notion... and there’s a very great risk of exponential miscarriages of justice.”

An emotional and visibly distressed Jarratt told “60 Minutes” that his career had “ground to a halt,” having been consigned to “media death row” as an accused rapist. “I’m trying to find out how the hell I’m going to pay my lawyers and all the other debts that I’ve incurred through two years of unemployment,” he said.

Describing himself as “collateral damage,” he added: “I happen to be well known, which makes it a million times worse, but the person who is the perpetrator of an evil lie walks away scot-free with a suppression order. This is wrong in the case of sexual assault charges.” Jarratt has called for the reform of laws dealing with sexual assault, so

that neither party is publicly named unless someone is found guilty and convicted.

Jarratt’s defamation action against the *Telegraph*, which is set down for mention in the NSW Supreme Court later this month, with the case expected to begin later this year, follows Geoffrey Rush’s recent successful legal action against the same newspaper and journalist. While lawyers for the *Telegraph* are appealing the Rush verdict, the Oscar-winning actor was awarded \$2.9 million, the largest ever defamation payment to a single individual in Australia.

Although Jarratt and Rush have been vindicated in the courts, the unproven claims of sexual misconduct by #MeToo and the media—amid scores of others in the US and Europe—have seriously impacted on their health and psychological well-being, and seriously damaged, perhaps irreparably, their careers.

By contrast, cheerleaders for #MeToo, such as Tracey Spicer, have boosted their public profiles and careers. Spicer has been showered with awards for championing #MeToo. In 2018, she became the recipient of an “Order of Australia,” two Walkley journalist awards and was included in the *Australian Financial Review’s* 100 Women of Influence list.

And the awards have kept coming. This year, Spicer won the New South Wales Woman of the Year prize and in November, she and Tarana Burke will accept the 2019 Sydney Peace Prize for their promotion of #MeToo.

The gushing tributes accompanying such accolades make no mention of the fact that #MeToo is a right-wing, anti-democratic movement that has launched vicious and self-serving attacks on the “presumption of innocence” and other hard-won democratic and legal rights. It remains utterly indifferent to the fate of those whom it has falsely accused of rape or sexually inappropriate behaviour, even after they have been exonerated in a court of law.



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