

# FAIR AGENDA

## Rape prevention advocates urge parents to push for prevention training ahead of O'Week

### PRESS RELEASE

**EMBARGOED 6:00am Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February**

As thousands of students prepare to move into university residences, community groups Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus Australia are urging students and parents to make sure their residence is providing training to prevent sexual violence.

The call follows last year's report from the Australian Human Rights Commission that revealed students who lived in university owned or affiliated residential accommodation were more likely than other students to have been sexually assaulted.

Community campaigning group Fair Agenda has today released the results of their 2018 survey of university residences' training to prevent sexual violence.

Of the 210 residences approached with the survey, 146 have provided a response.

Of the 146 residences that responded to Fair Agenda's survey, 126 indicated that they will train all students in consent and preventing sexual violence. But only 91 of the residences indicated that any of their student training would involve experts from a sexual assault service.

Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda said: "We urge all students heading off to live on campus, and their parents, to find out what training their residence is providing to prevent sexual violence, and whether or not experts from a sexual assault service will be involved."

"Most new residents will spend hours in trainings and inductions in O'Week. That schedule should include training to prevent sexual violence. Things like: what it means to get informed and active consent; how to safely intervene if you think a friend might be unsafe; and also how to respond if a friend discloses they've been sexually assaulted." Ms Carr added.

"Students are telling us that they want more information – that they want to know how to have good, consensual sex." Says Sharna Bremner, End Rape on Campus Australia. "They know how the plumbing works; what they need is practical information on how to ethically approach real life circumstances. And that's where training from experts like sexual assault services can make a huge difference."

"Evidence shows that education and training can help prevent sexual assault – if it's done well. That means: delivered by professionally trained experts, who have enough time and resources to canvass and discuss the issues properly, and who deliver at least some of that training face-to-face." Said Professor Andrea Durbach, author of *On Safe Ground*, a Good Practice Guide for Australian University responses to sexual assault.

"Evidence based training in this area should be an absolute and on-going priority. This isn't the kind of issue that can be addressed with just a once-off online course."

Universities should be approaching this problem with the rigour we bring to our academic pursuits.” She added.

“Residences should also be making sure their staff are being properly trained to prevent and respond to sexual violence.” Added Ms Carr from Fair Agenda.

“The most important factor in the recovery of a student who has been sexually assaulted is the response they get when they first tell someone.” Says Ms Bremner. “We’ve heard from too many students that the staff member they’ve disclosed to has started victim blaming, or minimising what’s happened, and that the staff response has actually made things worse.”

Only 107 of the 146 residences who responded to Fair Agenda’s survey questions indicated that a sexual assault service would be involved in training any of their staff.

“The data shows that sexual violence is a huge issue on campus. Residences should be getting professionally trained experts in to train their students and their staff, and doing everything possible to promote their student’s safety and wellbeing.” Ms Carr added.

The results of Fair Agenda’s 2018 residence survey can be viewed at: [www.fairagenda.org/residences\\_survey](http://www.fairagenda.org/residences_survey)

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**Fast facts:**

- 2.3% of female uni students were assaulted in a university environment in 2015/16 (AHRC; Changing the Course, 2017, p7)
- Although less than ten per cent of students live in a university residence; the AHRC survey found that of those who were sexually assaulted in a university setting in 2015/16, 34% were living in a university residence at the time. (AHRC; Changing the Course, 2017, p66&67)
- 63% of the students who witnessed another student being sexually assaulted at university in 2015/16 did not take action in response. A third of those said they did not know what to do. (AHRC Report: Changing Course, 2017, p104 & 110)

**Residence survey numbers:**

- 210 residences were sent Fair Agenda’s survey questions
- 146 residences have responded to the survey so far (as at 16 February)
- 126 residences indicated they are training all students in consent and preventing sexual violence
- 57 residences indicated a sexual assault service would be involved in training all students, and a further 34 indicated they will involve a sexual assault service in training some, but not all students.
- 133 residences indicated they would train all staff with welfare responsibilities in preventing sexual violence
- Only 84 residences indicated they will involve a sexual assault service in their training for all staff with welfare responsibilities (a further 23 indicated they would involve a sexual assault service in training some staff)

**Chart 20: Living arrangements at time of most recent incident of sexual assault and sexual harassment**

