



“We don’t need a calendar to know when O’Week is on – we can tell every year from the spike in calls to our rape crisis service.”

- Karen Willis, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia

PRESS RELEASE

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Leading advocates on university sexual violence **Fair Agenda**, **End Rape on Campus Australia**, **National Union of Students** and **The Hunting Ground Australia Project** are today calling for the establishment of an independent, expert-led taskforce to track, assess and publicly report on university and residences’ measures to prevent and improve responses to sexual violence.

“The ongoing revelations about sexual violence and appalling behaviour in our universities demonstrate that this is a systemic and ingrained problem.” said Renee Carr Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

“Universities finally made commitments to act on sexual violence in response to last year’s national student survey results - but whether or not those commitments will deliver substantive improvements for student safety remains to be seen.” said Allison Henry, Campaign Director of The Hunting Ground Australia Project.

“Every week we hear from students who have suffered horrendous violence, and who have been further traumatised by their university’s response. The mechanisms for students getting the help they need; or holding universities to account for failures on this issue are ad-hoc at best. What’s more – there aren’t any easily identifiable consequences for universities and residences who fail to actually make improvements on this issue.” added Sharna Bremner, Director of End Rape on Campus Australia.

“Unfortunately, over the years universities have proven that real, across the board change on this issue only happens with external accountability.” said Kate Crossin, Women’s Officer at the National Union of Students.

“At current rates, hundreds of students will be sexually assaulted in a university setting this year. It should be an ongoing national priority to improve student safety and wellbeing – and that work should be led by experts, who can hold universities and residences to account if they fail to address this issue.” added Ms Carr.

“The shocking behaviour at some residences is in the headlines this week – but it characterises some people’s university experience all year round. We need a mechanism that can ensure action on this issue is a top priority now, and into the future.” added Ms Carr.

Ms Bremner said: “The appalling predatory and bullying behaviour that has been exposed by Nina Funnell this week shows the extent of the problems we need solved. If this is the kind of behaviour that’s normal at your residence, a student can expect to encounter it everywhere: in their kitchen, their shared bathroom, their common room. That’s inescapable. And that’s unacceptable.”

In 2014 the US established a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, to provide a coordinated federal response to campus sexual violence and a national oversight mechanism to ensure responses across the country were aligned and transparent.

Fair Agenda, End Rape on Campus Australia, National Union of Students and The Hunting Ground Australia are calling for an independent, expert-led taskforce to:

- Be comprised of independent experts in the field of sexual violence prevention (including sexual assault services and representatives from the Consortium of Sexual Assault Researchers);
- Regularly consult with student representative bodies;
- Require universities to regularly report on the measures they and their associated entities (including residences and colleges) are taking to address and prevent sexual violence - including the policies and procedures in place;
- Require universities and residences to regularly report on disciplinary measures taken against perpetrators;
- Assess whether or not university and residence policies and procedures to address and prevent sexual violence meet good practice, and if they are improving outcomes;
- Publicly report on these assessments and make public recommendations to strengthen university and residence policies and procedures;
- Publicly report on the number of complaints relating to sexual violence made to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency under the Threshold Standards, as well as their status and outcome/resolution; and
- Incorporate data from, and feed into, the next independent national survey of students.

More information on the campaign can be found at: www.fairagenda.org/taskforce
A copy of the joint statement can be accessed online at www.fairagenda.org/taskforce_jointstatement

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