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COMBATIVE TO COLLABORATIVE

International Perspectives on Preventing Sexual Violence at Australian Universities

Findings from a Churchill Fellowship

Report by Camille Schloeffel, December 2023

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Combative to Collaborative: International Perspectives on Preventing Sexual Violence at Australian Universities.

Report by Camille Schloeffel, Churchill Fellow.

2020 Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to explore ways activists and universities can work together to prevent sexual violence on campus – Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom.

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Camille Schloeffel

1 December 2023



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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of Country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. I also extend that respect to all Traditional Custodians and Owners of the places I visited and thank them for their hospitality. Many of the people I interviewed spoke about how First Nations ways of thinking, being and doing influenced their practices. I respectfully acknowledge the wisdom, guidance and openness of all First Nations peoples who have contributed to this work and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded and that Australia always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

“

Sexual violence thrives on silence, living in the shadows, so any sort of activism work to disrupt the silence is so integral to dismantling rape culture.

”



– **Micah Kalisch**, Founder of the Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy, Response, for Survivors (PEARS) project, and former President of Trinity Against Sexual Assault and Harassment (TASAH), at Trinity College, University of Toronto, Canada.

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to all victims and survivors of sexual violence and trauma, including those who are no longer with us.

I see you, I hear you, I believe you.

Please know that you are never alone and you deserve a life full of happiness, love and support.

I am eternally grateful for the power and strength I draw from our collective survivorship.

I am here for you and I am so glad you are reading this report.

Note on terminology

This report uses '**victim-survivor**' to refer to a person who has experienced sexual violence. The term 'survivor' was often used by the people I interviewed to describe a person who has experienced sexual violence. In Australia, the term 'victim' is also used. Some people may identify with one term or the other, or neither. Both terms are valid.

This report also uses '**perpetrator**' to refer to a person who has engaged in sexually violent behaviour. The terms 'respondent' or 'reported party' were often used by the people I interviewed to describe a person who had used sexual violence. These have been changed to 'perpetrator' for clarity and accessibility purposes.

Content warning and support services

This report discusses sexual violence and institutional betrayal. Reading this report may bring up strong feelings. Free advice and support is available **24/7** online and via telephone through the following services:

- [1800RESPECT](#) (1800 737 732) National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service
- [Lifeline](#) (13 11 14) National Crisis Support
- [13YARN](#) (13 92 76) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Support

Acknowledgements

I express my deepest gratitude to the activists and advocates whose shoulders I stand on. You are the reason I am able to do this work. You inspire me and give me courage every day to keep going, even when I want to give up.

Firstly, thank you to the selection panel members of the 2020 Churchill Fellowship process who believed in me, and everyone at the Winston Churchill Trust. I especially thank Toby Bradshaw and Rose Clapham for your continued support throughout my fellowship journey, and for being so kind when there were hiccups or delays. Thank you to Jessica Bujeya from FCM Travel for your help to get me to where I needed to be. Thank you also to my sponsor, Mr Peter Mitchell, who donated a portion of his Estate to the Churchill Trust to support the youth of Australia. My fellowship is in Mr Peter Mitchell's name as one of the recipients under the age of 30.

Thank you as well to my referees Samitha Ramanayake and Katrina Marson, and for Katrina's ongoing guidance and support over the course of my fellowship journey.

I want to acknowledge everyone who took the time to speak with me over the course of my research. I am so grateful to every person I met for having deep and informative conversations with me. To every victim, survivor, student, expert and activist – talking openly and honestly has taught me so much about how we can better address sexual violence in Australian universities.

I feel extremely privileged to have met so many wonderful people on my journey. I would like to particularly acknowledge and thank Johanna Kauppi for inviting me into her home on my travels as well.

Thank you to the community of volunteers and my dear friends at The STOP Campaign for your endless support and leadership to keep up so much wonderful work while I was away for five months. Sophie Aboud and Emily Bottoms – thank you for your leadership during this time.

Thank you to all of my beautiful friends and family for their love and support of my passion to undertake this adventure. A special thank you to Patrick Doyle for always being by my side and for your constant encouragement and support. Every time I went into a slump and felt like it was all too much, you always picked me back up.

Sophie Aboud and Patrick Doyle not only supported me personally, but also reviewed every single sentence of my research write-up. Your dedication to help me make my research the best it can be has taken a huge weight off my shoulders. You both deserve the title of editors of this report!

A big thank you to Zoë Davidson for jumping in to help edit this report in the final few weeks. Your feedback and attention to detail has helped me so much with getting the right message across.

My Churchill Fellowship experience was truly life-changing for me, and having all of these wonderful people by my side to help me piece together the puzzle has made such a difference.

“

I need more students to know that they are valued in this space and at the end of the day they are college students, so should be experiencing ‘college’. They should be on a journey that is violence free, or if they have already experienced violence to have the tools to navigate through it and a community to help them along the way.

”



– **Kenyora Lenair Parham**, Executive Director of End Rape On Campus, USA.

About the author

Camille Schloeffel is a passionate activist for the prevention of sexual violence and promotion of sexual wellbeing. She is the Founder of The STOP Campaign, a volunteer grassroots intersectional feminist organisation addressing sexual violence in tertiary learning communities through empowerment, education, activism and awareness. Camille led The STOP Campaign as the Director and Safeguarding Manager from 2018 to the end of 2023. Under her leadership, she and her team successfully delivered the following projects:

1. **Revealing Truths and Breaking Stigmas Zine and Video Series** – A collection of anonymous stories and artwork on the theme of ‘revealing truths and breaking stigmas’ created by current students from the Australian National University (ANU) who are victim-survivors or supporters, shared in the form of a printed Zine and an accompanying video series.
2. **Reclaim the Narrative Zine and Video Series** – A collection of anonymous stories and artwork on the theme of ‘reclaiming the narrative’ created by ANU current or former students who are victim-survivors or supporters, shared in the form of a printed Zine and an accompanying video series.
3. **The Empowerment Program** – Six-week program for young women, trans and non-binary people designed to cultivate growth, foster empowerment, and build a supportive community in a safe, trauma-informed environment.
4. **The College Program** – Education and advocacy workshops for tertiary students in residential halls which aim to prevent sexual violence and promote sexual wellbeing.
5. **The Safe Response Toolkit** – A physical and online resource for victim-survivors and their supporters that provides information about how to safely respond to sexual violence disclosures and access reporting avenues and support services.
6. **#IDeserveSafety Campaign** – A social media campaign, national survey and submission to the Australian Government Universities Accord, calling on the Australian Government to establish an independent national oversight mechanism to hold universities accountable for failing to protect students from sexual violence.

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Development Studies and a Bachelor of Arts (Human Rights) in 2019, Camille worked in the Australian Government across sexual violence, online harms and child abuse policy areas. She is currently working in the community sector in sexual violence prevention for people with disability. In December 2023, Camille completed her Master of Social Work at the Australian Catholic University (ACU).

In 2020, Camille was awarded the Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to explore ways activists and universities can work together to prevent sexual violence on campus, and travelled to the United States of America (USA), Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) in late-2022 to undertake this research. As a survivor herself, she is passionate about ending sexual violence in all its forms, supporting others to share their truths, building communities of care and leading collective action.



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THE
STOP
CAMPAIGN

Executive summary

Sexual violence at Australian universities is a critical issue. The prevalence of sexual violence, coupled with inadequate institutional responses, underscores the failure of Australian universities to create safe learning environments and emphasises the need for change. Additionally, Australian universities are falling behind their counterparts in the USA, Canada and the UK to effectively prevent sexual violence. In those countries, grassroots activism and pressure from community organisations have played a crucial role in prompting government commitments and sector-wide initiatives. This has resulted in positive progress whereby sexual violence is prevented, victim-survivors are supported and perpetrators are held accountable.

My Churchill Fellowship's focus was to explore collaborative approaches between activists and universities to prevent sexual violence. My research and findings confirm that partnerships between national and state governments, university institutions, activists and advocates, and community action and support groups are necessary to ensure student safety.

From September to November 2022, I travelled to the USA, Canada, England and Scotland, and attended an international conference in Mexico. My goal was to identify new approaches for preventing sexual violence in universities that have resulted in positive change, specifically looking at the prevention methods activists would use in comparison to institutional responses. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, observed and participated in workshops and events, shadowed leaders and attended conferences. I interviewed 96 people over 58 interviews, met with 24 people in informal meetings, attended two conferences and participated in two workshops. In total, I spoke to more than 120 people from university offices, student groups, researchers and academics, experts and gender-based violence practitioners, frontline service providers and community organisations, grassroots activists and campaign organisers, and victim-survivors.

In synthesising my research from tertiary communities in the USA, Canada and UK, I identified seven core principles and ethical standards underpinning their approaches to prevent and respond to sexual violence. I refer to these as the **core principles for effective prevention**. The seven core principles for effective prevention are:

1. Comprehensive
2. Collaborative
3. Trauma-informed
4. Intersectional
5. Anti-oppressive
6. Feminist
7. Person-centred.

Implementing these core principles in the Australian context will require progressive reforms within the university sector. It will also require collaborative partnerships between a diverse range of stakeholders in order to realise each principle in practice. To this end, I have provided **61 recommendations** which provide a roadmap for change that fall within seven themes:

1. Prevention
2. Collaboration
3. Activism
4. Communities of care
5. Report and support pathways
6. Accountability and transparency
7. Government intervention.

These recommendations provide tangible actions for institutions, governments and activists to consider. They also include general recommendations about how prevention can be done effectively. These actionable steps embed the core principles for effective prevention into policies, procedures and practices, paving the way for transformative change in Australia.

Australia must learn from the USA, Canada and the UK's efforts to create safer university experiences and implement effective prevention measures. My Churchill Fellowship journey reinforced that activists play a pivotal role in instigating systemic and institutional reform. Through collective action, activists inspire sociocultural change by shifting attitudes, behaviours, policies and procedures. Their work is crucial in preventing sexual violence, supporting victim-survivors and holding perpetrators accountable. The purpose of this report is to inspire substantial policy reforms and create safer tertiary learning environments for all.

Introduction

How I got here

Universities, residential halls and student accommodation providers in Australia fail to provide safe learning environments for students. Sexual violence impacts everyone in universities and is perpetrated across all levels of these institutions. Sexual violence on Australian university campuses is highly prevalent and institutions are failing to safeguard students from harm. My experience of engaging in grassroots activism in my own community, including through preventing sexual violence on campus and supporting my peers who had experienced sexual violence, demonstrated how far university institutions would go to silence me. The institutional backlash and subsequent harm that was done to myself and others demonstrated how combative, rather than collaborative, institutional leaders would be in order to 'protect their reputation'.

I consider university spaces, particularly residential halls and student accommodation, to be some of the most likely places for young people to be victimised in Australia. This is backed up by evidence, as well as my own lived experiences and the experiences of others I have connected with and supported. Recent national data tells us that one in three university students in Australia have experienced sexual assault at least once, and more than half of those people did not know where to seek support following their experience.¹

University communities often have a major influence on a young person's attitudes, values and behaviours. This influence, coupled with the prevalence of violence and harm in university settings, means these institutions can play a key role in condemning and deterring perpetrator behaviours, and empowering and supporting victim-survivors.

Despite the uniquely powerful position of Australian universities to implement policies to prevent sexual assault and harassment on campus, they continue to fail in this duty. Instead of amplifying voices and views through effective policies, universities are contributing to a culture of abuse and victimisation in institutions that should be safe havens for young people as they begin the next chapter of their life.

My personal experience of starting The STOP Campaign in 2018 when I was a student living in a residential hall at the ANU, and my journey following, is what sparked me to apply for a Churchill Fellowship. The Churchill Fellowship is an opportunity provided by the Australian Churchill Trust to travel overseas to conduct research on a passion project by meeting people in the field and bringing back your learnings to inform change. My fellowship research focused on seeking a diverse range of perspectives and experiences of institutional responses to sexual violence internationally.

1) Nisbet, L., Halse, G., van Esbroek, E., Heywood, W., Powell, A., & Myers, P. (2022). *National Student Safety Survey: Qualitative Research on Experiences of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault among University Students in 2021*. The Social Research Centre.

This report considers ways to improve institutional responses in an Australian context, including through centring trauma-informed practices and building communities of care. Ultimately, my fellowship aims to identify new, practical ways for universities and activists to work together to prevent sexual violence and make Australian universities safer for all.

Fellowship aims

I was awarded the Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship in 2020 to explore ways activists and universities can work together to prevent sexual violence on campus. In 2022, I embarked on an 11-week research journey to the USA, Canada, England and Scotland in the UK, and attended an international conference in Mexico.

In my research, I focused on exploring the role of activists and the prevention methods they develop to prevent sexual violence in comparison to those developed by institutions.

I also investigated how relationships between activists and institutions can be effectively built and mobilised to create change in the sexual violence space by observing and learning from:

- Relevant university taskforces, committees and units
- Student activists and victim-survivors who effectively campaigned for change in their university communities
- Community organisations with direct experience in sexual violence prevention and response
- Academics and experts who teach courses on the issue of sexual violence prevention and response and/or engage in their own activism
- Existing campaigns, events and program sessions.

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, observed and participated in workshops and events, shadowed leaders and attended conferences.

Specifically, my research sought to find:

- New mechanisms of preventing sexual violence on campus through collaboration between university institutions, community organisations and activists
- Models where these collaborative relationships have been productive and influenced positive change on campus.

Importantly, my goal is to ensure that this project benefits the Australian community by:

- Providing best practice examples of positive collaboration between activists and institutions
- Leveraging grassroots advocacy and activism, including my own experience, to inspire institutions to listen to students and enact substantial policy reform in their efforts to prevent sexual violence
- Preventing sexual violence from occurring and keeping everyone safe on university campuses.

Who this report is for

This report is for victim-survivors, activists, advocates, university leaders and staff, and government decision-makers. However, while the recommendations are targeted at people and groups working to address sexual violence in tertiary learning communities, this report also talks about methods of effective activism to bring about sustainable sociocultural change. In this way, the findings and learnings in this report are relevant to everyone.

To **victim-survivors**, I hope engaging with this report brings you a sense of community, solidarity, shared experiences and hope for change.

To **activists** everywhere, this report is built from your work fighting against a system that has failed to safeguard the wellbeing of those they are supposed to protect. I hope engaging with this report provides you with connections to individual activists and activist groups, and that we can continue to build collective action to continue to be stronger together.

To **advocates**, many of whom are working from the inside of systems to better them. I hope by engaging with this report you can build confidence in using this report and its findings to advocate for innovative and collaborative solutions to prevent sexual violence and support people affected when it occurs.

To **university leaders and staff**, I hope you can consider this report in its full breadth, and seek to be brave and work alongside activists and victim-survivors to listen to their experiences and solutions.

To **government decision-makers**, with power comes responsibility. I hope this report makes you consider how you can use your power for good, to change lives, and to make decisions that change the culture of rape and institutionalised silence that exists across the tertiary education sector.

To everyone else reading this report that doesn't feel as though you fit into any of these categories, **thank you for engaging with this report**. I hope reading this motivates you to get involved and contribute to positive change in your own circle of influence.

Keywords

Sexual violence

University

Activism

Prevention

Collaboration

“

Institutional change may take time, but there is a difference between the slowness of institutional change and being ignored by those who you need in order to make that change.

”



– **Sage Shumate**, 2022-23 President, and **Kelly Walsh**, 2022-23 President of Events, of the Sexual Assault Response Coalition (SARC) at Northeastern University, USA.

Core principles for effective prevention

Throughout my research, it became evident that there were core principles and ethical standards underpinning approaches to prevent and respond to sexual violence in tertiary communities in the USA, Canada and the UK. I refer to these as the **core principles for effective prevention**. Although initiatives and approaches differed across the countries I visited, these principles remained consistent across the different contexts. These core principles underpin how sexual violence can be prevented systemically. They are inherently anti-establishment and prioritise relationships and care, rather than the patriarchal norms of current society. Most importantly, implementing these core principles in the Australian context would require progressive reforms within the university sector.

1 — Comprehensive

Comprehensive prevention takes an all-encompassing approach that spans across all places and spaces within the community. Comprehensive prevention utilises a public health model by detecting, preventing and responding to sexual violence through three tiers of prevention. *Primary prevention* addresses the long-term risk factors of sexual violence, including preventing people from becoming perpetrators by changing values, attitudes and social norms that reinforce rape culture. *Secondary prevention* addresses the short-term and/or immediate threats of sexual violence, including preventing perpetrators from taking action by challenging their beliefs, controlling the environment and intervening before they act. *Tertiary prevention* addresses the continuation of sexual violence and further harm, including by preventing repeat perpetration and/or continued perpetration. In a university context, comprehensive prevention requires a whole-of-institution approach which includes students, staff, faculty and visitors, to bring about system-wide changes to prevent sexual violence on campus.

2 — Collaborative

Collaborative prevention recognises that those closest to the issue (namely victim-survivors, community members and people with lived experience) are best placed to contribute to solutions. Collaboration may differ in practice depending on who is leading the prevention activity, but it must always be grassroots and community-led. In a university context, a collaborative and community-led approach to sexual violence prevention should include engagement with students and victim-survivors to develop, review and deliver prevention activities (peer-led). It must be informed by local and community expertise (including sexual health services, gender-based violence specialist services, advocacy services and local government). It should also be tailored where practicable to the specific needs of communities within the tertiary setting (including LGBTIQ+ students, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, students with disability and students in residential accommodation).

3 — Trauma-informed

Trauma-informed prevention involves understanding trauma and seeking to do no harm when engaging with others. The guiding principles of being trauma-informed are safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. Trauma-informed care is when all parts of an organisation gain an understanding of trauma and how it affects individuals that engage with that organisation, and adapt their systems accordingly. Sexual violence prevention that is trauma-informed acknowledges the harm caused, believes the person who experienced harm, and shifts responsibility and accountability onto the person who used violence. It is responsive to the support needs of the people affected by trauma, inclusive of victim-survivors and their supporters. It also involves empowering people to make informed decisions about their next steps ensuring that choice and autonomy about any decision-making is restored to the victim-survivor.

4 — Intersectional

Intersectionality is the understanding that different forms of inequality and discrimination (such as discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, sex, sexuality, age, religion, socio-economic status and/or disability) combine, overlap and intersect to shape and influence an individual's experiences. Intersectionality recognises that some victim-survivors of sexual violence find it much harder to achieve justice and receive support because of intersecting forms of discrimination and the additional structural or systemic barriers that they face. For example, disclosing sexual violence, reporting to police, going to hospital, asking for help, or receiving other forms of assistance may be especially difficult or complicated for some people. In a university context, intersectional prevention means ensuring that all services and activities to prevent sexual violence also acknowledge and address other forms of violence. It requires proactive acknowledgement of all forms of systemic oppression, such as white privilege, white supremacy, ableism and racism within institutions, alongside activities that embed intersectionality into solutions that address campus sexual violence.

5 — Anti-oppressive

Anti-oppressive prevention challenges and dismantles oppressive structures and practices through a social work lens. This framework requires an understanding of intersectionality and critical self-reflection to actively mitigate power imbalances and their ongoing impacts. Activism and advocacy that promotes equity and justice for oppressed communities is an essential element of anti-oppressive prevention work. Anti-oppressive practice is also interlinked with decolonisation, which involves alleviating colonial power structures and belief systems in institutions (including universities, which favour Western and privileged ways of doing, thinking and being). It requires individuals to be accountable for their actions and seek to influence institutions in order to reform them.

6 — Feminist

Feminist approaches to prevention are underpinned by a gendered analysis of violence and harm which recognises the disproportionate rates of sexual violence that women, trans and non-binary people experience. Feminism must also be intersectional and acknowledge how different aspects of a person's gender and identity interact to influence the way they experience the world (especially patriarchy, misogyny and sexism) and the barriers they might face as a result. An intersectional feminist approach to preventing sexual violence emphasises that each victim-survivor's experience is unique, and that addressing sexual violence requires us to address other forms of discrimination and oppression as well.

7 — Person-centred

Person-centred prevention focuses on putting the individual at the centre of the service, treating them as a person rather than just a problem to be fixed. It takes a holistic view of the person and their experiences, beliefs and behaviours rather than labelling them based on a specific behaviour, action or attribute. For a person who has experienced sexual violence, this can look like coordination of care and/or wrap-around support for them and their needs. For a person who has used sexual violence, this can look like guiding them towards being accountable for their actions while also providing coordination of care and/or wrap-around support. Person-centred care is usually embedded in restorative and transformative approaches to justice.

“

*Courage to speak
truth to power is not
a common thing. We
have to do this work
as a community.*

”



– **Sasha Wiley-Shaw**, Educator at the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO), and **Mimi Neufeld**, Policy Advisor at the Alma Mater Society (AMS), at the University of British Columbia, Canada.

List of recommendations

My list of recommendations comes under the banner of seven prevalent themes from my research, and should be adopted alongside the core principles for effective prevention. Whilst the core principles should be applied to all initiatives, they are broad-based and do not provide specific calls to action. In contrast, these recommendations provide specific responsibilities targeted towards certain stakeholders, such as universities, activists or governments. Some recommendations are also general in nature as they speak to how prevention can be done effectively.

1. Prevention

- 1.1. Successful prevention programs must be **underpinned by the core principles for effective prevention**. To see positive results, programs should be **intensive, relevant**, include **positive messaging** and be **data driven**. This should include a clear focus on **sexual wellbeing** as an alternative to sexual harm to normalise safe, happy and healthy relationships.
- 1.2. Prevention of sexual violence must be approached through a **public health model** that comprehensively addresses primary, secondary and tertiary prevention and targets the whole community.
- 1.3. Institutions must **deliver annual prevention and response training** to students, staff and faculty including information that is specific about the resources available. Staff and faculty should also receive specific training on trauma-informed practice in the classroom and/or when engaging with students.
- 1.4. Student leaders and support staff must receive **comprehensive education and training** on sexual violence, responding to disclosures, report and support avenues on and off campus, trauma-informed care and language, and how to care for themselves, as well as ongoing support to achieve their roles.
- 1.5. Prevention programs should be delivered in **peer-to-peer** formats across the campus community, with appropriate support and training.
- 1.6. Institutions should **embed sexual violence prevention education and bystander intervention training into the curriculum**. This could also include student action that is linked to class credit to encourage students' active participation in local change.
- 1.7. Prevention programs should be **regular** and have **wide reach** across the campus community.
- 1.8. **Peer support care models** must be maintained as an important part of building a positive and supportive community in residential halls, with appropriate support and training for student leaders.
- 1.9. Institutions should promote their sexual violence prevention initiatives and the staff who deliver them should be **visible** and **recognisable** to the campus community.

2. Collaboration

- 2.1. Universities must **build meaningful partnerships** across the institution and with community stakeholders, including with victim-survivors, activists, advocates and community organisations.
- 2.2. Institutions and organisations should **share information** and **collaborate** on prevention activities.
- 2.3. Institutions should create a **multi-stakeholder approach across sectors** to address sexual violence in universities. This comprehensive collaboration should prioritise students, activists and community sector organisations in the local region of the university, rather than private sector for-profit partners.
- 2.4. Institutions should adopt **co-design principles** when creating input and feedback opportunities for community members. This requires institutions to create **safe spaces** for community members to be able to meaningfully engage with their prevention activities.
- 2.5. Institutions must **consult student body representatives** and the **broader student community** when seeking student perspectives.
- 2.6. Institutions, governments and other community stakeholders should **amplify victim-survivor views and voices**, and **celebrate student activists** by treating them seriously and valuing their work as expertise. This could be through funding, resources, in-kind support, partnerships, spotlighting or even through emotional support and care.
- 2.7. Student unions should have structures in place for **regular communication** with **students in residential halls and student accommodation**, and should proactively seek to engage with these communities.
- 2.8. Student unions must build trust with the student body to make change, including by **standing up for students**, particularly student activists, and supporting student activist efforts to prevent sexual violence on campus.

3. Activism

- 3.1. Activism must be **community-led** and **intersectional** in ways that amplify all voices and views, with a particular focus on people who disproportionately experience sexual violence and who are traditionally ignored by mainstream media.
- 3.2. Activist movements should be grounded in principles of **solidarity**, **collaboration** and **collective action**.
- 3.3. Activists should form **collectives** and **coalitions** to build supportive communities instilled with collective power.

- 3.4. Activist movements should be ongoing and strategic by acting as **hubs of institutional memory** and **intergenerational learning**.
- 3.5. Activists should build movements that are **sustainable** by creating structures that retain people to continue campaigns and achieve lasting positive reforms.
- 3.6. Activists should embed **safety**, **care** and **peer support** into their movements to alleviate volunteer burnout and high turnover.
- 3.7. Campus-related activism and advocacy must be **led by current students**, with leaders who graduate continuing to act as mentors to incoming student leaders.

4. Communities of care

- 4.1. All service providers, activists and university staff should adopt **trauma-informed** principles.
- 4.2. Institutions must facilitate **peer support care models**, including by supporting and investing in appropriate training and resources for students, staff and faculty.
- 4.3. Institutions should practise **person-centred care** in all settings, especially when delivering frontline and support services to victim-survivors, supporters, first responders and perpetrators.
- 4.4. To create a community of care, institutions must **embed care through design**. A first step to creating such a community of care is to **co-design policies and procedures** with the people they directly affect – victim-survivors, marginalised students, activists – and then start to build trust amongst the community by implementing these policies through **genuine action**.
- 4.5. Where possible, activists and communities should consider building **peer support networks** of mutual aid and community care if institutions have failed to provide these.
- 4.6. Communities of care should consider developing a **platform** for victim-survivors and their supporters **to share their experiences** anonymously, safely and on their own terms.

5. Support and report pathways

- 5.1. Institutions must provide **accessible, trauma-informed** and **confidential support** for victim-survivors and their supporters so that people are provided with the information and resources to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- 5.2. Once support for victim-survivors and their supporters has been established, institutions should consider establishing **confidential support for perpetrators**. This could be in the form of dedicated specialist case managers working with perpetrators to promote accountability, provide education and link to support.

- 5.3.** Institutions should explore **restorative and/or transformative practices** across campus, not just when addressing sexual violence. Restorative justice principles and objectives must be in all spaces at university – inclusive of the classroom, security and residences. This must be expert-led and done in a way that facilitates trust and restoring of relationships between the institution and victim-survivors, activists and students.
- 5.4.** When implementing non-punitive reporting pathways, universities should use language like **‘non-investigative’ pathways** rather than the more common phrase of ‘alternative’ to help legitimise non-punitive reporting pathways as an equally valid option.
- 5.5.** Institutions must have **amnesty policies** for victim-survivors, supporters and bystanders, inclusive of students, staff and faculty. These policies should protect individuals from being punished for breaching other policies, such as prohibition of alcohol or drugs on site, when they report sexual violence to their college or university. These policies should also allow for individuals to advocate for their needs without threat of retaliation and punishment by the institution.
- 5.6.** Institutions should have staff available to act as **confidential resource advisors** (who are not mandatory reporters) to support victim-survivors and provide them with information about their options moving forward, such as their reporting options and other support options like emergency accommodation.
- 5.7.** Universities should **support** students and staff to engage in **broader prevention policy agendas**.
- 5.8.** Institutions should ensure there are **reporting avenues** with the option to remain **anonymous**.
- 5.9.** **Privacy and confidentiality must not be compromised** unless a person is at risk of harm to themselves or others. Mandatory reporting to a central office must not be enforced in residential hall settings. Instead, a community of care culture should be developed which believes victim-survivors, supports their choices, and ensures the whole community has access to information, resources and education on how to appropriately and compassionately respond.

6. Accountability and transparency

- 6.1.** Institutions must **show courage and be accountable** to the prevalence of sexual violence and harm on campus, and listen to experts on best practice responses.
- 6.2.** **Governance and oversight mechanisms** should be established through transparent, merit-based processes that include students, experts and the local community.
- 6.3.** Institutions must deliver public annual reporting of initiatives, priorities and ongoing response work that explicitly references the implementation of **transparent policy frameworks**.

- 6.4.** Institutions must create **long-term strategic** and **financial investments** to prevent sexual violence on campus.
- 6.5.** Universities should administer a **campus climate survey** (sexual violence prevalence and monitoring survey) every two years, to be sent out to every student in the university. This data must then be published on their public website and stored in a central repository. This survey should capture more than the prevalence of harm occurring on campus, but also ask questions about the resources students are accessing for support and how their experience was in accessing these resources.
- 6.6.** Institutions must create a **waiver for students** who experience sexual violence and are consequently unable to meet the relevant grade requirements for their educational program (for example, students who must maintain a certain grade to keep their scholarship).
- 6.7.** A 'scorecard' system should be developed to **assess actions on sexual violence by institutions** across Australia to make comparisons across the sector. This must be led external to the university sector to ensure independence and be led by or co-designed with victim-survivors and grassroots activists.
- 6.8.** Institutions should **publicly acknowledge the harm caused** by their betrayal and apologise to those impacted, regardless of when the harm occurred.
- 6.9.** Universities should **collect regular data** to internally measure prevalence of sexual violence and to check progress against prevention activities. Data should seek to gain a better understanding of victim-survivor and perpetrator characteristics, demonstrate when investigations have been undertaken and their outcomes, and convey to the wider university community (and beyond) that sexual violence is taken seriously.
- 6.10.** Institutions must **embed monitoring and evaluation** in all prevention initiatives from the beginning.
- 6.11.** Sexual violence prevention should be the **responsibility of all staff** across an institution.
- 6.12.** Institutions must be **proactive** at ensuring staff are not victimised and do not face administrative burdens or resistance to change in prevention efforts.
- 6.13.** University staff experiencing resistance to change in prevention efforts should **monitor, assess and report on this resistance** in addition to any progress being made.
- 6.14.** Institutions or university staff should **build a staff and/or faculty network** of champions and allies.

7. Government intervention

- 7.1. Governments should value activism as essential to **holding institutions accountable** and **creating public awareness** of what is occurring on campus.
- 7.2. Governments must facilitate **collaboration, alliance building** and **information-sharing** across the sector.
- 7.3. Governments should **invest resources** into this work and provide funding opportunities to enhance prevention efforts on campus.
- 7.4. Governments should investigate **legislating standards of care** for universities and regulate these standards if they become legislated.
- 7.5. Governments should explore **legislative options to prevent universities from retaliating** against victim-survivors, their supporters and activists.
- 7.6. Governments should explore **legislative options to protect university staff and faculty from being punished** for supporting victim-survivors and activists, to reduce harm and create a safer environment for reporting and response.
- 7.7. Governments should be **vocal** on the issues of sexual violence in tertiary learning communities.
- 7.8. The Australian Government should build an **external organisation** with oversight of universities, that is led by sexual violence experts.

Overview of my itinerary

11 weeks **5 countries**

58 formal interviews with 96 people

20 with 30 people in the USA

25 with 40 people in Canada

13 with 13 people in the UK

9 with 9 people in England

4 with 4 people in Scotland

6 meetings with 24 people

2 conferences

1 international conference in Mexico

1 national conference in Scotland

2 workshops

1 in the USA

1 in Canada

I spoke to more than 120 people inclusive of:

University offices **Victims and survivors**

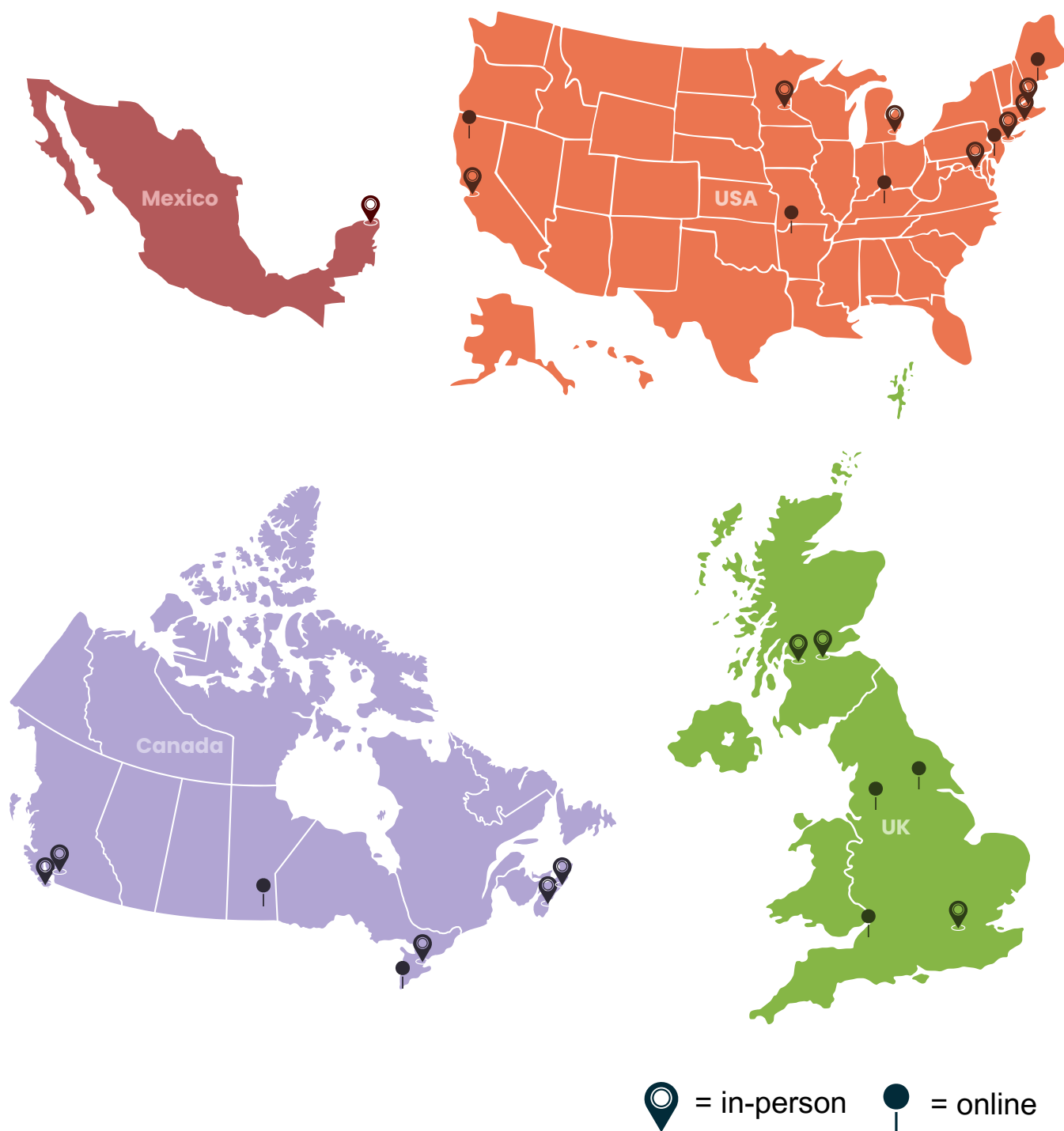
Student groups **Researchers and academics**

Experts and gender-based violence practitioners

Grassroots activists and campaign organisers

Frontline service providers and community organisations





A note on changes in my itinerary

During my travels I became unwell with an unexpected illness, which led me to having an urgent surgery when arriving in London, England. As a result, I had to postpone most of my UK-based interviews to recover from surgery. I rescheduled most of my planned interviews on my return to Australia in January and February 2023. Unfortunately this meant there were changes in my itinerary, as well as delays in writing this report.

Detailed itinerary

United States of America

September, 2022 Palo Alto, California USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr <u>Jennifer Freyd</u>, Founder and President, and Dr Sarah Harsey, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, at the <u>Center for Institutional Courage</u>.
September, 2022 Online Mount Shasta, California USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr <u>Alan Berkowitz</u>, independent consultant in health and social justice and leading prevention expert.
September, 2022 Online New York City, New York USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr <u>Jennifer Hirsch</u>, Professor, Co-Director at the <u>Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation (SHIFT)</u>, and co-author of <u>Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus</u>.
October, 2022 Online Kentucky USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jennifer Henkle, Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Response at <u>National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education</u> and lead of the <u>Culture of Respect</u> initiative.
October, 2022 Kingston, Rhode Island USA	A day and interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keith Labelle, Assistant Director of the Bystander Intervention Program, <u>URi-STANDers</u>, and students Drew, Nadia and Shawn, at the <u>University of Rhode Island</u>.
October, 2022 Online USA	Attended workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Cultivating Community Strengthens Solidarity: Committing to a Culture of Respect</u> by Jennifer Henkle and Jessica Henault, leaders of the <u>Culture of Respect</u> initiative.

October, 2022 Boston, Massachusetts USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liisa Balazs, 2020-22 President of the <u>Sexual Assault Response Coalition (SARC)</u> at <u>Northeastern University</u>.
October, 2022 Boston, Massachusetts USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liisa Balazs, 2020-22 President, Sage Shumate, 2022-23 President, and Kelly Walsh, 2022-23 President of Events, of the <u>Sexual Assault Response Coalition (SARC)</u> at <u>Northeastern University</u>.
October, 2022 Boston, Massachusetts USA	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Sexual Assault Response Coalition (SARC)</u> at <u>Northeastern University</u>, with a presentation to members by the <u>Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)</u>.
October, 2022 Boston, Massachusetts USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Greta Spoering</u>, Senior Clinical Services Coordinator, and <u>Rachel DiBella</u>, Associate Director for Education Programs, at the <u>Office for Gender Equity</u> at <u>Harvard University</u>.
October, 2022 Online New York City, New York USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shael Norris, Founding Executive Director of <u>SafeBAE</u>.
October, 2022 Ann Arbor, Michigan USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr <u>Kaaren Williamsen</u>, Director of the <u>Prevention, Education, Assistance and Resources (PEAR) unit</u> (and former Director of the <u>Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)</u> at the <u>University of Michigan</u>.
October, 2022 Ann Arbor, Michigan USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Huhman, Director of the <u>Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)</u> at the <u>University of Michigan</u>.

October, 2022 Minneapolis, Minnesota USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Nicole Bedera</u>, Sociologist Researcher, Co-Founder of <u>Beyond Compliance</u>, and Affiliate Educator at the <u>Center for Institutional Courage</u>.
October, 2022 Minneapolis, Minnesota USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Alicia Leizinger</u>, Health Promotion Specialist at <u>Boynton Health</u> at the <u>University of Minnesota Twin Cities</u>.
October, 2022 Minneapolis, Minnesota USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie Eichele, Director, Bronte Stewart-New, Legal Advocacy Coordinator, Alexa Paleka, Prevention Program Coordinator, Chloe Vraney, Associate Director, and Demi Adediran, Men's Engagement Coordinator, at the <u>Aurora Center</u> at the <u>University of Minnesota Twin Cities</u>.
October, 2022 Online Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr <u>Laura Sinko</u>, Mental Health Nurse and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner in Philadelphia, Director of Research and Evaluation at <u>Our Wave</u>, Director of the <u>Phoenix Gender-Based Violence Lab</u> and Assistant Professor at <u>Temple University</u>.
October, 2022 Online Portland, Maine USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily Bohen James, Co-Executive Director of the <u>Every Voice Coalition</u>.
October, 2022 Online Boston, Massachusetts USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Theon, student at <u>Boston University</u>, and Director of Student Affairs within the <u>Boston Intercollegiate Government</u>.
November, 2022 Washington D.C. USA	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grace Wankelman, Co-Founder of the <u>Do Better Campaign</u>.

November, 2022 Washington D.C. USA	A day and interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omny Miranda Martone, Founder and CEO of the <u>Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)</u>.
November, 2022 Hybrid Washington D.C. and Fayetteville, Arkansas USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omny Miranda Martone and Reid Pinckard, President of the first <u>Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)</u> Campus Chapter at the <u>University of Arkansas</u>.
November 2022 Washington D.C. USA	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Kenyora Lenair Parham</u>, Executive Director of <u>End Rape On Campus (EROC)</u>.
November, 2022 Washington D.C. USA	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Prout and Susan Prout, Co-Founders of <u>I Have the Right To</u>.

Canada

<p>October, 2022 Online Canada</p>	<p>Attended workshop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Learning Labs: Developing a Theory of Change Model for Peer Program</u>, led by Dr CJ Rowe, Project Advisory Committee Co-Lead and former Co-Director, and <u>Dr Salina Abji</u>, Evaluation Consultant, of the <u>Courage to Act</u> initiative at <u>Possibility Seeds</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Online Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr CJ Rowe, Project Advisory Committee Co-Lead and former Co-Director of the <u>Courage to Act</u> initiative at <u>Possibility Seeds</u>, and Director of the <u>Sexual Violence Support and Prevention Office (SVSPO)</u> at <u>Simon Fraser University</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Alicia Oeser</u>, Director of the <u>Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO)</u> at the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Online Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr <u>Brenda Morrison</u>, Director of the <u>Centre for Restorative Justice</u>, and Associate Professor in the <u>School of Criminology</u> at <u>Simon Fraser University</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Online Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Carly Stanhope</u>, Director of the <u>Investigations Office</u> at the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savannah Sutherland, Assistant Manager of the <u>Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC)</u> at the <u>Alma Mater Society (AMS)</u>, student union of the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.
<p>October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada</p>	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dana Turdy, Vice President Academic at the <u>Alma Mater Society (AMS)</u> of the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.

October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mimi Neufeld, Policy Advisor at the <u>Alma Mater Society (AMS)</u>, and Sasha Wiley-Shaw, Educator at the <u>Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO)</u>, at the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.
October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ismail Muftau</u>, Vice President of University and Academic Affairs at the <u>Graduate Student Society (GSS)</u> of the <u>University of British Columbia</u>.
October, 2022 Vancouver, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chantelle Spicer, former Co-Chair of <u>Students for Consent Culture (SFCC) Canada</u>.
October, 2022 Victoria, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna-Elaine Rempel, Volunteer Organiser, and Jenn Krogfoss, Support Coordinator, at the <u>Anti-Violence Project (AVP)</u> at the <u>University of Victoria</u>.
October, 2022 Victoria, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leah Shumka, Associate Director of the Conflict Engagement and Investigations team within the <u>Equity and Human Rights Office</u>, and new staff member, Lane, at the <u>University of Victoria</u>.
October, 2022 Victoria, British Columbia Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keddie Hughes and Kenya Rogers, law students at the <u>University of Victoria</u> who created the Students for Trauma Informed Lawyering project.
October, 2022 Toronto, Ontario Canada	<p>Interview with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Micah Kalisch</u>, Founder of the <u>Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy, Response, for Survivors (PEARS)</u> project, and former President of <u>Trinity Against Sexual Assault and Harassment (TASAH)</u>, at <u>Trinity College, University of Toronto</u>.

October, 2022 Toronto, Ontario Canada	Confidential interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual violence prevention and support staff at an undisclosed university.
October, 2022 Toronto, Ontario Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Farrah Khan</u>, CEO of <u>Possibility Seeds</u>, Executive Director of the <u>Courage to Act</u> project, and former Manager of <u>Consent Comes First</u> at the <u>Toronto Metropolitan University</u>.
October, 2022 Online Winnipeg, Fredericton and Victoria. Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Lobson, Founder, Niko Coady, Partner Success Coordinator, and Nell Perry, Partnership Liaison, of <u>REES</u> (which stands for Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors).
October, 2022 Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Jennifer Llewellyn</u>, Director of the <u>Restorative Research, Innovation and Education Lab (RRIELab)</u>, Associates <u>Melissa MacKay</u>, restorative justice practitioner, and <u>Jake MacIsaac</u>, Assistant Director of <u>Security Services</u>, at <u>Dalhousie University</u>, and visiting fellow <u>Dr Holly Northam OAM</u> (who is also a Churchill Fellow from Canberra).
October, 2022 Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Lyndsay Anderson</u>, Sexualised Violence Advisor at the <u>Office for Equity and Inclusion</u> at <u>Dalhousie University</u>.
October, 2022 Antigonish, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addy Strickland and Emma Kuzmyk, Co-Founders of <u>Writing Activism</u> and the <u>StFX Peer Support Program</u> at <u>St. Francis Xavier University (StFX)</u>.
October, 2022 Antigonish, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alyssa Spridgeon, the <u>Visible@X</u> Coordinator at <u>St. Francis Xavier University (StFX)</u>.

October, 2022 Antigonish, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Blackburn, the <u>Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate</u> at <u>St. Francis Xavier University (StFX)</u>.
October, 2022 Antigonish, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moraig Macgillivray and Kayleigh Trenholm, coordinators of the <u>Healthy Relationships For Youth Program</u> at the <u>Antigonish Women's Centre & Sexual Assault Services</u>.
October, 2022 Antigonish, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>StFX Student Union</u> representatives Naomi Stobart, Sophia Fabiano, Brendan Roberts, Ben Fairhurst and Molly Burke.
October, 2022 Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holly Foxall, Founder and Program Director, and Emma Kuzmyk, Program Coordinator, of <u>Action Now Atlantic</u>.
January, 2023 Online Windsor, Ontario Canada	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr <u>Charlene Senn</u>, academic, researcher, Founder of the <u>Sexual Assault Resistance Education (SARE) Centre</u>, creator of the <u>Sexual Assault Resistance Education for University Women: The Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) Sexual Assault Resistance Program</u> and Co-Founder of the <u>University of Windsor Bystander Initiative</u>.

The United Kingdom

September, 2022 Online Bristol, England UK	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> J Smith, Co-Founder of <u>Not On My Campus (NOMC) UK</u>, National Association for Safer Higher Education (NASHE) UK and Students Rise International.
September, 2022 Online UK	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Association for Safer Higher Education (NASHE) UK.
October, 2022 Online York, England UK	Meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kelly Balmer, Co-Founder of <u>The Last Taboo</u>, and student activist when previously studying at the <u>University of York</u>.
November, 2022 London, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H Farley, experienced leader having worked in various sexual violence prevention and support roles, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training facilitator at Not the Only One. Coordinator for <u>Enough is Enough</u> at <u>SOAS University of London</u>. <u>Consent education expert consultant and researcher</u> at the <u>London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)</u>. Campaign coordinator for <u>Got Consent?</u> at the <u>University of St Andrews</u>.
November, 2022 London, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mia Liyanage, student activist when previously studying at the <u>University of Oxford</u>, former Co-Chair of <u>Common Ground Oxford</u>, and author of the 2020 Higher Education Policy Institute debate paper <u>Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities</u>.
November, 2022 London, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Ravencroft, Communications Manager at <u>ProtectED</u>.

November, 2022 Stirling, Scotland UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johanna Kauppi, the co-convenor (Secretary) of <u>Not On My Campus (NOMC) UK</u>.
November, 2022 Glasgow, Scotland UK	Attended conference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmilyTest Gender-Based Violence Charter Conference, with speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Fiona Drouet, Founder, Chastyn Webster, Charter Development Manager, and Kara Stewert, Training Lead, of <u>EmilyTest</u>. ◦ Jamie Hepburn MSP, the Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training in Scotland. ◦ Clarissa J. DiSantis, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Manager at <u>Durham University</u>. ◦ Professor <u>Graham J. Towl</u> in Forensic Psychology at Durham University. ◦ Professor Lesley McMillan, Chair of the <u>University and College Union</u> sexual violence task group. ◦ Gemma McCall, Co-Founder and CEO of <u>Culture Shift</u>. ◦ Dr Michael Murray, Clinical Lead at the Institute of Neurosurgery in Glasgow and Chair of <u>Medics Against Violence</u>. ◦ Niamh Kerr, Training and Education Coordinator for Universities and Colleges from <u>Rape Crisis Scotland</u>. ◦ <u>Alice Ruggles Trust</u>.
November, 2022 Stirling, Scotland UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jess Reid, 2022-23 Vice President for Communities at the <u>University of Stirling Students' Union</u>, Founder of the <u>Sexual Health and Education Society</u>, and Campaigner with <u>Reclaim Stirling</u>, at the <u>University of Stirling</u>.
November, 2022 Glasgow, Scotland UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niamh Kerr, Training and Education Coordinator for Universities and Colleges at <u>Rape Crisis Scotland</u>.

December, 2022 Online Glasgow, Scotland UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Anni Donaldson, co-author of the <u>Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit</u> and the <u>Equally Safe in Higher Education Research Toolkit</u> (known at the ESHE Toolkit).
January, 2023 Online York, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicola Campbell, Head of Student Conduct and Respect at the <u>University of York</u>.
January, 2023 Online York, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Nimmo, Community and Wellbeing Officer of the <u>University of York Students' Union</u> at the <u>University of York</u>.
February, 2023 Online Manchester, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <u>Harriet Smailes</u>, Universities Lead at <u>LimeCulture</u>.
February, 2023 Online London, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Dodridge, Report and Support Project Officer in the <u>Student Services</u> team at <u>Imperial College London</u>.
February, 2023 Online London, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allison Havey, Co-Founder of <u>The Raising Awareness and Prevention (RAP) Project</u>.
February, 2023 Online Manchester, England UK	Interview with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya Peters, Product Marketing Manager at <u>Culture Shift</u>.

International

September, 2022
Cancún, Quintana Roo
Mexico

Attendance at:

- Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum.

Key speakers working in addressing university sexual violence:

- Jennifer Wagman, Founder of the Global Campus Violence Prevention Network (USA).
- Laura Castrillón-Guerrero and Diana Ojeda, researchers on institutional and non-institutional processes of prevention, attention, denunciation and sanction of gender-based violence in university environments in Colombia at the Universidad de los Andes (Colombia).
- Eunhee Park, Co-Principal Investigator of the Double Jeopardy project, as part of UC Speaks Up at the University of California (USA).
- Elisabet Le Roux, lead researcher on campus rape culture with women students in South Africa using PhotoVOICE 2.0 research at Stellenbosch University (South Africa).
- Elena Kim, Associate Professor and research lead in eradicating campus-based violence in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan from the American University of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan).

The need for change in Australia

Universities in Australia have repeatedly failed to provide safe learning environments. Students have the right to attend a learning institution without the fear of being sexually assaulted, silenced, blamed and/or minimised to a statistic.

Prevalence of sexual violence in Australian universities

In 2017, the Australian Human Rights Commission published *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* (Change the Course report). This report outlines the prevalence and nature of sexual violence at the 39 member universities of Universities Australia (UA). Some key findings from the Change the Course report included:

- Across 2015 and 2016, one in ten female university students were raped or sexually assaulted.
- Approximately 200 sexual assaults occurred within a university setting each week, or an average of 30 sexual assaults per day.
- Approximately 68 students living in university accommodation will be raped or sexually assaulted in a university setting each week.

In 2021, UA released the *National Student Safety Survey: Report on the Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault among University Students in 2021* (the NSSS). Of the 40,000+ Australian university students surveyed in the NSSS, one in 20 had been sexually assaulted and one in six had been sexually harassed since starting university. Some other key findings from the NSSS include:

- One in three university students have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
- The highest rate of sexual assault in the university context was reported by students who identify as women (41.8%), transgender (42.9%), and non-binary or non-identifying (56.1%).
- 51% of sexual assaults experienced by university students in 2021 occurred in student accommodation, university clubs, societies, events and/or spaces.
- Only 5.6% of students who were sexually assaulted made a formal report to their university. Fewer than one in three of these students who came forward were satisfied with the process.

Noting that there were fewer students living on campus during the data collection period in 2020-2021 (due to COVID-19), the ongoing rates of sexual violence on campus are likely to be much higher than the NSSS indicates.

The NSSS also discussed students' awareness of reporting and support services available on campuses. 50% of students surveyed did not know how to make a report of sexual violence and 74.5% of those who experienced sexual assault on campus did not seek help from their university.

Ultimately, these statistics demonstrate that sexual violence is highly prevalent in Australian university communities. The NSSS presents a clear issue with the way that sexual violence is currently addressed, and highlights the need for reform of current practices and policies.

Institutional betrayal by Australian universities

Institutional betrayal is the harm that an institution inflicts on people who depend upon it. Individuals who expect an institution to keep them safe may feel betrayed if the institution instead fails to prevent violence, creates difficult or unsafe processes for reporting, supports cover-ups, endorses misinformation or punishes victim-survivors who disclose their experiences. In the university context, institutional betrayal refers to when a university fails to implement measures to prevent and respond to sexual violence, as well as actions that contribute to a culture where sexual violence is normalised.

Current institutional systems fail to uphold their commitments to student safety when victim-survivors are continually disbelieved, blamed or stigmatised while disclosing or reporting their experiences. When students are treated this way by their universities, it can cause further harm in addition to the direct trauma that they have already experienced from sexual violence. The immense psychological pressure can prevent victim-survivors and their supporters from speaking freely or from providing a full and accurate account of their experiences.

Legal and policy context of Australian universities

There are limited legislative and policy frameworks governing how sexual violence is addressed at Australian universities. The Australian Government is the biggest source of funding for universities.² Despite this, as of the time of writing this report, the government has failed to introduce measures to hold institutions accountable in ensuring they provide safe learning environments for all. There is no national policy mandating Australian universities to provide environments free from discrimination and sexual violence for all students.

UA is the peak body for the university sector in Australia. Its members include 39 of Australia's 43 universities. In 2016, UA began the Respect. Now. Always. initiative which provides guidance frameworks for the sector to improve their sexual violence prevention and response policies. Despite these national guidelines, university institutions across Australia have adopted different policies and procedures for sexual violence and response, leading to inconsistency across the sector.

Activism to address sexual violence in Australian universities

Although Australian universities have procedures in place, they often fail to meet the needs of students and the rates of sexual violence continue to rise. This is why I started The STOP Campaign in 2018 as a direct response to the failures of universities in the Australian Capital Territory, specifically the ANU which I was attending at the time, to protect students from sexual violence on their campuses. Australian institutions' inaction in preventing and adequately responding to sexual violence on campus demonstrates the importance of grassroots activism to incite change and advocate for improvement.

I have witnessed first-hand the detrimental impacts that sexual violence has on student communities. It was clear throughout my journey as a student leader, activist and as the Founder of The STOP Campaign, that university leadership are resistant to change. Universities fail to effectively collaborate with community stakeholders in their limited efforts to address sexual violence in tertiary education settings. Specifically, there has been a lack of leadership by those in power, such as Vice-Chancellors, to stand up as vocal and visible advocates for change on this issue. In the absence of leadership from senior executives, students, particularly victim-survivors, have taken on the burden through grassroots activism, advocacy, peer support and prevention programs.

2) Ferguson, H. (2021). *A Guide to Australian Government Funding for Higher Education Learning and Teaching*. Research Paper Series 2020-21. Parliamentary Library.

Advocates, university students and victim-survivors have seen universities across the country fail to meet their commitments to address sexual violence. Support offered by universities is frequently ill-equipped to meet the student demand. Anecdotally, I have found student safety and wellbeing staff are often poorly trained in responding to the complex needs of victim-survivors. Universities have a legal duty to promote and foster a safe environment, and provide support services that are informed by the needs of students.³ This is not the reality I have encountered. It has been made clear over decades of student activism movements like The STOP Campaign that without effective enforcement of these standards, real improvement is unlikely.

To date, student activists and advocates have been doing the brunt of the work to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus. Since 2018, End Rape On Campus (EROC) Australia has been advocating alongside the National Union of Students and Fair Agenda for better university responses to sexual violence. Specifically, they have called on the Australian Government to intervene by establishing an independent expert-led taskforce to provide oversight and accountability of universities in their responses, policies and practices.⁴ Since the 2017 Change the Course report was released and awareness about sexual violence on university campuses was driven further into the mainstream, there has been little change in the responses of universities to sexual violence. Advocates, university students and victim-survivors share the feeling that universities need to do more to take a stance against sexual violence to protect the wellbeing and safety of students.

In 2023, there has been progress on the issue of university sexual violence since the Australian Universities Accord process began, and the launch of The STOP Campaign's #IDeserveSafety Campaign at Parliament House. However, there is still a lack of coordinated systemic advocacy tackling sexual violence in Australian universities. EROC Australia and The STOP Campaign are the only two organisations (which are both fully volunteer) in Australia focused on this issue – however both operate very differently and neither have a focus on systemic advocacy. While there has been progress on this issue at the institution-level, and more recently a national level, directly resulting from the advocacy of Sharna Bremner of EROC Australia and student activism of The STOP Campaign, these movements are unsustainable and rely largely on the work of a few individuals in their unpaid time.

Barriers to collaboration

My research focuses on collaboration between institutions and activists, and the prevention methods that activists adopt compared to more formal institutional responses. This is based on my experiences of facing barriers to collaboration with university institutions in my role as a student activist.

3) *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Cth) pt 2.3.

4) Henry, A. (2019). Responses to Sexual Violence in Australian Universities. *Human Rights Defender*, 28(3), 29-32.

Some specific barriers to collaboration between universities and activists to prevent sexual violence on Australian campuses include:

- Institutional betrayal from universities failing to meet the demands of students and staff, including when they fail to follow through after publicly committing to change following a review or incident.
- Reliance on student leaders and junior staff to 'fix' the problem, and the exploitation of students who have been harmed to engage in efforts with little to no remuneration.
- Retaliation against people who speak out on the issue, such as legal threats and/or claims (including defamation), or threats to rescind scholarships or terminate employment.
- Enforcement of non-disclosure agreements and/or disciplinary action following a report because of other conduct (for example, punishing a victim-survivor for underage drinking when the assault occurred).
- Delegitimising the work, lived experience and expertise of student activists.

These are some of the more common barriers I have experienced and which have been echoed in my discussions with students and staff across Australia.

Need for new approaches

Comparative to gender-based violence in other contexts, such as intimate partner violence and child sexual abuse, there is limited research on sexual violence in university settings in Australia, especially in prevention. In recent decades, bystander intervention models have gained increasing preference in the university sector as the main sexual violence prevention activity.⁵ However, there is a lack of investment in comprehensive sexual violence prevention programs that would more meaningfully contribute to building safer campus communities. Universities have a responsibility to implement a range of measures to reduce sexual violence and provide support to victim-survivors.

The impacts of sexual violence do not disappear after someone leaves university – they are lifelong. Universities must recognise these impacts and take steps to understand them so they can mitigate further harm and be accountable for the unnecessary harm they may cause. Victim-survivors should feel supported by their university rather than being treated as though they are the problem.

5) Kania, R., & Cale, J. (2021). Preventing Sexual Violence Through Bystander Intervention: Attitudes, Behaviours, Missed Opportunities, and Barriers to Intervention Among Australian University Students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(5-6), 2816-2840.

“

Most survivors don't speak up, and when they do they get silenced. There is a whole industry with its sole purpose to steamroll the survivor into silence as a financial exercise. For them, 'it's cheaper to steamroll'.

”



– Alexander Prout and Susan Prout, Co-Founders of I Have the Right To, USA.

Experiences and Findings:

United States of America



Overview

5 weeks

20 formal interviews with 30 people

3 meetings with 13 people

Discussions with people from 11 states:

California

Rhode Island

Minnesota

Arkansas

New York

Massachusetts

Pennsylvania

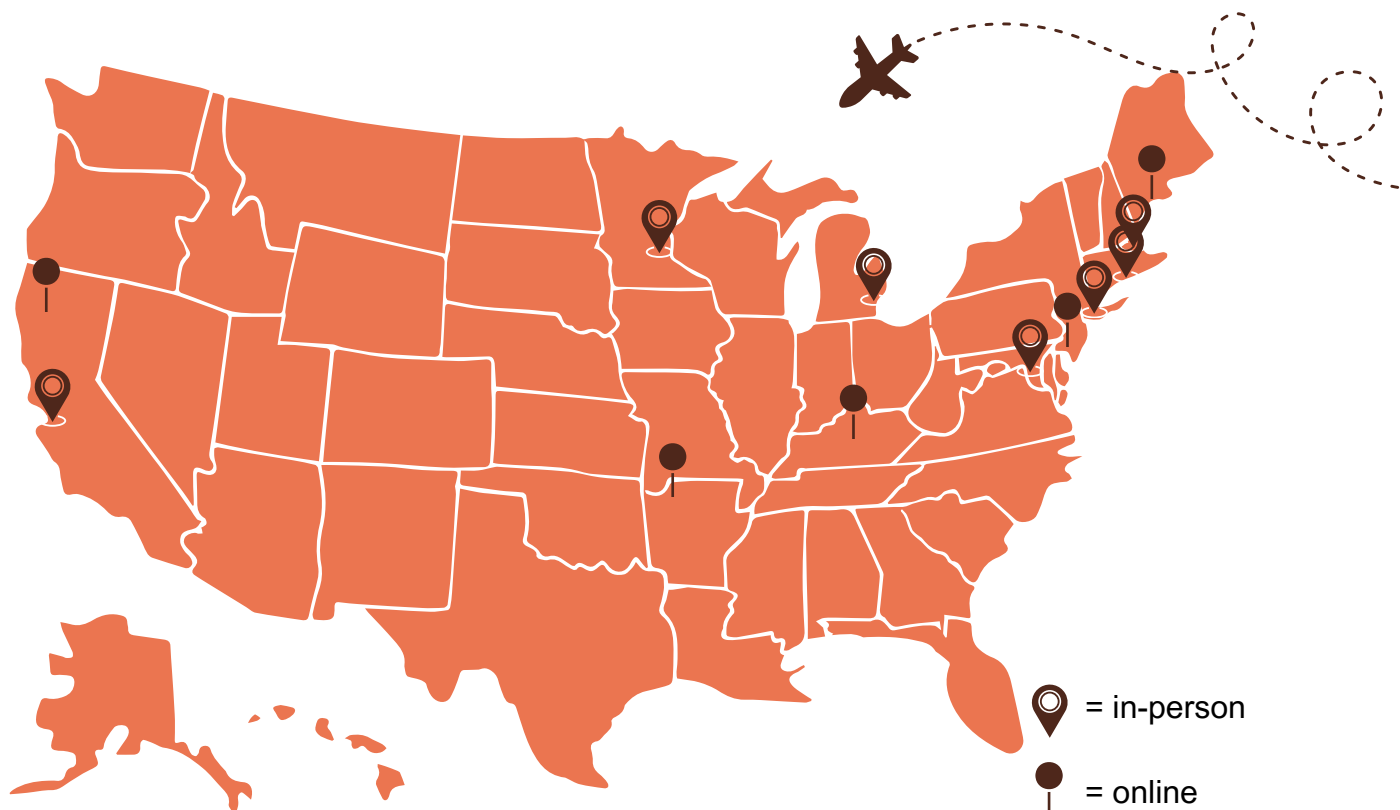
Kentucky

Michigan

Maine

Washington D.C.

1 workshop



Key learnings

Systemic reform in the USA has largely been driven by grassroots activism. Students, victim-survivors and communities have called for universities to adequately resource their sexual violence prevention and support teams, create or amend policies to be more survivor-centred, trauma-informed and intersectional, and to hold perpetrators accountable. Student activists have also gone on to join organisations that coordinate prevention across the country, whilst others have started working at universities seeking to reform the system from within.

Speaking with university representatives in the USA made me realise how unprepared campuses in Australia are to prevent and respond to sexual violence safely and effectively. Universities in Australia continue to build residential halls and create new communities on campus without also establishing the necessary frameworks to prepare staff to respond to the increased rates of sexual violence and other issues that emerge in these contexts. As modelled by multiple institutions that I met with across the USA, universities that choose to provide homes for students must also invest in wrap-around support and coordination of care.

This coordination of care is interlinked with the public health approach to preventing sexual violence. Seeing sexual violence as a public health issue legitimises it as something that requires investment and buy-in from senior leaders and institutions. It also rejects the notion that sexual violence and other related harms are a 'family' problem (to be dealt with privately), which is a traditional and historical way of viewing violence in society. Addressing sexual violence as a public health issue and implementing a coordination of care approach addresses the current situation where activists and advocates (who are mostly victim-survivors themselves) are lifting the load to combat this issue. The activists and advocates I interviewed explained how many are overworked and underpaid, if paid at all – leading them to experience high rates of burnout and stress. Institutions should fairly remunerate activists and advocates to coordinate care for victim-survivors as they are best placed to develop positive relationships with the student community. Australian universities should also employ experts to deliver comprehensive and innovative education programs like those at the USA universities discussed in this report.

Legislation is one way to set a legal framework for prevention which is transparent and standardised, while also influencing cultural change. In the USA, national legislation provides overarching standards and expectations across the country, which is supported by state-specific legislation mandating tangible changes on campuses to safeguard students from harm. Similar state-based laws should be considered in the Australian context. For example, Australian university students desperately need laws that protect them from university retaliation following a report of sexual violence.

Australian university staff and faculty desperately need an amnesty policy to protect them from being punished for supporting victim-survivors and activists, to reduce harm and create a safer environment for reporting and response. Ultimately, implementing both state and national legislation appears to be an effective option to hold institutions accountable for their inaction and betrayal and ensure consistency and transparency across the sector.

Speaking with activists, experts and practitioners in the USA gave me so much hope and inspiration for what could be done in Australia, and demonstrated that activism really is at the core of cultural change. Grassroots student-led activism is integral to preventing sexual violence in university communities – whether it be visible or behind-the-scenes. There is a lot for us to learn from the USA's example.

“

Activism means everything. I love the idea of conceptualising activism in lots of different ways. We have this stereotypical idea of activism as visual, vocal organising - which is powerful but it's one type of activism. There are so many things that fall under this umbrella. Students educating their peers is activism to me. They are giving people the knowledge, awareness and skillset to be informed people. Activism is also organising an event that gives survivors a space to share their stories. Some people are quiet influencers. I care about knowing your unique strengths and uplifting those because everybody has something to contribute.

”



– **Dr Kaaren Williamsen**, Director of the Prevention, Education, Assistance and Resources (PEAR) unit at the University of Michigan, USA.

National legal and policy context

The legal system is the backbone of sexual violence response within university settings in the USA. Dr Kaaren Williamsen, Director of the Prevention, Education, Assistance and Resources (PEAR) unit at the University of Michigan, describes the culture in the USA as legalistic compared to other jurisdictions like Canada or Australia. This view of the law is underpinned by the dichotomies of right and wrong and guilty or not guilty. This black-and-white approach tends to not allow for nuance and context to be considered. Williamsen described how this approach is not designed to meet the complex support needs of people who experience violence. An influx of legal professionals entering the tertiary prevention and response space has intensified the reliance on a legalistic approach to managing campus sexual violence. Their adversarial approach to sexual violence investigation and response – which may resemble a criminal trial more than a civil or restorative justice process – has been detrimental to victim-survivor wellbeing in many cases.

Title IX

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

– Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688

Title IX is a law that prohibits sex discrimination in education settings. While Title IX was not intended to focus on sexual assault and harassment, the absence of more pointed legislation means that it is currently relied on to underpin sexual violence responses in universities across the USA. Williamsen spoke about how Title IX is a double-edged sword as it addresses gender discrimination, including campus sexual violence, but through a carceral frame.

Indicating the positive benefits of this national legislation, Williamsen and Anne Huhman, Director of the University of Michigan's Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), spoke about how Title IX has helped advocates get buy-in to do their ground-breaking work at the university. For many institutions in the USA, the 'hook' is Title IX and the obligations it imposes on institutions.

I note, however, that universities' compliance with Title IX obligations is not closely monitored, which has led to many universities not delivering adequate prevention activities.

Further, some universities use Title IX against victim-survivors who report a sexual assault through re-traumatising processes that see victim-survivors being cross-examined like in a courtroom. Sage Shumate and Kelly Walsh, student activists on the executive of the Sexual Assault Response Coalition (SARC) at Northeastern University, spoke about how Title IX is ineffective in addressing campus sexual violence on a national scale, as universities across each of the states differ in the standards they create to address this legislation. Title IX sets baseline requirements for Title IX offices, but universities do have the option to go above this threshold of compliance. Shumate explained that some universities do nothing past the bare minimum set by Title IX. For example, some universities still don't have confidential support available for people who experience sexual violence.

Title IX coordinators are people employed at the university to investigate complaints of sexual misconduct. Nicole Bedera, sociologist and expert on addressing sexual violence, explained how Title IX coordinator hiring practices often result in university leaders 'cherry picking' people they know, or people already within the university institution. Further altering the approach between each university, Title IX coordinators can be influenced by different experiences or role frameworks which guide practice. For example, many prosecutors are employed in Title IX roles at universities, which leads them to adopt a more punitive and criminal approach despite it being a civil process.

Shumate also spoke about her experience with Title IX offices as a student leader in a Resident Advisor (RA) role (pastoral care role in a residential hall), and in her role as President of SARC. Shumate explained how RAs are mandated reporters and are forced to report any instance of sexual violence they are aware of to the Title IX office directly. There are many flaws in this approach. Firstly, it prevents people from disclosing to their RA in the first place out of fear of their confidentiality being broken and their experience being told to the Title IX coordinator without their consent. Secondly, it suggests that a victim-survivor is a case to be managed rather than a person to be listened to, believed and supported because of how this approach removes a victim-survivor's autonomy to share their experience and make decisions about what happens next on their own terms. She also spoke about how there is limited training and support provided by Title IX offices to equip RAs with the necessary skills, confidence and resources to understand sexual violence, provide safe environments for their peers, and be able to respond to disclosures safely and compassionately. At Shumate's university, RAs are expected to provide pastoral care support to their peers, including by responding to disclosures of sexual violence, but only receive one training on Title IX during their induction training period.

The Clery Act

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (the Clery Act) is a national law requiring colleges and universities to disclose information about crime occurring on and around their campuses. However, there are issues with how this works in practice.

There is a lack of oversight and accountability for universities' compliance with the Clery Act. This means that universities can pressure people who experience sexual violence into not making a report to lower the recorded rates of violence on their campuses (thereby avoiding the risk of data reflecting poorly on the institution). I was told during my interviews that universities will often claim that they have had 'zero' reported instances of sexual violence, suggesting that sexual violence is not happening on their campus, when this is far from the truth.

This tactic by universities to cover up sexual violence reflects a broader problem with data collection and usage in the USA. When I spoke to Omny Miranda Martone, Founder of the Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA), they told me about how data released by government sources is biased in how it tends to only reflect the experiences of certain groups, such as cisgender white women. There lacks an intersectional analysis in how questions are asked in surveys and other data collection tools, such as restricting the gender options to 'male' or 'female'. Further, universities and other institutions tend to collect data that does not seek to really understand people's experiences and subsequently they show only portions of the victim-survivor's story so they control the narrative about what is happening on campus. This is something Martone and their team are trying to address by representing people who experience systemic disempowerment and are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence, such as undocumented migrants and Black trans women.

Another issue is that the Clery Act is not as well-known as Title IX. When I asked different student groups about the Clery Act, some of them had never heard of it or seen it utilised by their institution.

While Title IX and the Clery Act are two national laws that set minimum standards that universities should be meeting in terms of compliance, they don't necessarily meet the needs of students.

US Campus Grant Program

The Grants to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking on Campus Program (Campus Program) was created by the USA Congress in recognition of the unique issues and challenges that colleges and universities face in addressing sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. This funding opportunity for universities has allowed for investment in tackling violence on university campuses. For example, Anne Huhman spoke about how receiving a grant through this national program helped her and her team bring together stakeholders from across sectors in the community to develop a coordinated response to the issue of sexual violence on campus. This collaborative approach allowed university stakeholders to see the value of SAPAC's work and for the service to be incorporated formally into institutional processes. This contrasts with typical university responses which view sexual violence crisis response as an isolated issue that holds stigma and shame for students who might need to access it.

Education for Student Athletes

For universities that are members of the National Collegiate Athletics Association, all students in athletics are required to receive training on sexual assault every year. As an example of this, the University of Minnesota meets this requirement through the Aurora Center, which identifies at least one member from each sport team to be trained as a peer educator in sexual violence prevention to then facilitate training to their teams. The most common topics they speak about are consent, relationships and effective bystander intervention. The goal is to have multiple team sessions so that the prevention education is ongoing and helps create a culture that believes and supports victim-survivors. The University of Rhode Island meets this requirement through student interns (URi-STANDers) who deliver educational talks and training sessions to all athletics programs each year, as well as extra sessions on bystander intervention. The aim is for each first-year student to have participated in a minimum of three sexual violence prevention initiatives, facilitated by URi-STANDers, by the end of their first semester.

“*Sexual violence cannot end until all oppression ends.*”



– **Omny Miranda Martone**, Founder and CEO of the Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA), and **Reid Pinckard**, President of the first SVPA Campus Chapter at the University of Arkansas, USA.

Case study — NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

Linked to recommendations 2.1, 2.3, 5.1, 6.2 & 6.11

Culture of Respect is an initiative of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. It brings together public health and violence prevention researchers, and experts in advocacy, student affairs, higher education policy and law, to create resources and guidance on how to create safe campus environments. One of the core initiatives of Culture of Respect is its Collective, a two-year program that brings together higher education institutions to guide them through a rigorous process of self-assessment and targeted organisational change to address sexual violence on campus. This initiative aims to provide an alternative to one-off bystander intervention programs or online modules on consent – commonly used by institutions as the be-all-end-all to 'fixing' the problem.

The Collective has six pillars for change for participating institutions:

1. Survivor support with options for reporting
2. Ongoing self-assessment
3. Clear policies on misconduct, investigations, adjudications and sanctions
4. School-wide mobilisation with student groups and leaders
5. Multi-tiered education for the entire campus
6. Public disclosure of statistics.

The Collective assesses each institution, creates a personalised action plan, helps the institution to implement it and then reviews their progress at the end of the two-year period. Once the two-year period is over, institutions can receive ongoing support as required and requested.

Institutions are required to go through various assessment and evaluation activities while also catering their action plan to their own context. They do this in three stages:

- Institutions dedicated to addressing sexual violence (institution)
- Rigorous self-assessment (CORE evaluation)
- Targeted organisational change (customised plan).

When it comes to who evaluates the progress and actions of the institution, the Collective program requires that each institution establish a Campus Leadership Team. This team must include victim-survivor advocates, Title IX staff, general counsel, upper administrators, student leaders, athletics, faculty, campus and community law enforcement. The purpose of including people from various parts of the institution and community is that they all bring different strengths, perspectives, resources and roles in driving change.

To date, more than 150 institutions in the USA have participated in the Collective, leading to the following outcomes in the two-year period:

- Most institutions had their score increase in five of the six pillars.
- The average aggregate score went up by 50 points from the first self-assessment to the final self-assessment.
- Institutions became compliant with an average of three additional national requirements.
- Institutions made progress on 85% of their identified objectives throughout the program.

“Bystander intervention is not enough. This is why we embed evaluation into the Collective program where institutions go through a baseline assessment.”



– **Jennifer Henkle**, Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Response at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and lead of the Culture of Respect initiative, USA.

State legal and policy context

Most universities I visited in the USA did not have teams dedicated to addressing sexual violence in a multifaceted and comprehensive way like the Aurora Center at the University of Minnesota and SAPAC at the University of Michigan. Rather, they would usually have one or two Title IX coordinators, a few non-specialised counsellors at the campus medical clinic and campus police. When speaking to staff at the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota, they both spoke about how their legal and/or policy context on a state level has helped them to achieve change in their context.

Michigan

The state of Michigan requires all first-years on college campuses to receive in-person education programs on sexual violence. Using this as a 'hook', SAPAC was able to attain funding for a full-time program manager, two graduate student-staff and 25 paid student facilitators to facilitate their prevention education programs. From a strategic perspective, sexual violence prevention is pitched as integral to the broader diversity, equity and inclusion focus of University of Michigan. Since 2004, every single undergraduate student at the university has received comprehensive in-person workshops and supporting resources that provide a comprehensive understanding of sexual violence. This is starkly different to Australia, where sexual violence education only emerged around 2017 in the form of the tick-and-flick *Consent Matters* online module delivered inconsistently across the country. This sort of state-based requirement for more comprehensive sexual violence prevention education in universities has seen more students gain understandings of consent through peer-led in-person training, which has been reinforced through my interviews as more effective prevention.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, there is legislation that requires post-secondary education institutions to have a sexual harassment and violence policy. Section 135A.15 of the Minnesota Statutes states that universities must designate a staff member/s as confidential resource/s for victim-survivors of sexual violence, and ensure that the person who experienced violence is provided with information to make an informed decision about their next steps, including whether to report. This legislation restores choice and autonomy to victim-survivors, and denies institutions the option to determine the course of action to silence victim-survivors and protect their institutional reputation. There are other important clauses in this legislation that seek to ensure that universities must treat all victim-survivors with respect and dignity, rather than the all-too-common response of victim-blaming and shaming.

Katie Eichele, Director of the Aurora Center, and her team at the University of Minnesota, were actively involved in consultation on this legislative reform in 2022. It has subsequently assisted them in ensuring that the University of Minnesota continues to fund their work to support sexual violence victim-survivors. This has further enabled the Aurora Center to continue to employ student-staff and engage student volunteers to adopt peer-led models in their delivery of services. To become a volunteer or student-staff member, there is a mandatory training period of 40 hours. This training includes content on what sexual violence looks like, the effects of trauma, how to respond to disclosures in a safe and trauma-informed way, and intersectional language. This rigorous training is mandated by Section 595.02 of the Minnesota Statutes – all sexual assault crisis support staff, including volunteers, must undergo this training so they are equipped to provide the best, most trauma-informed support possible. Staff and volunteers in Australian universities would significantly benefit from similar training, as there is a lack of trauma-informed care in the Australian context.

“

I didn't set out to be an activist. I set out to prevent sexual violence and I became an activist.

”



– **Omny Miranda Martone**, Founder and CEO of the Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA), USA.

Case study — Every Voice Coalition

Linked to recommendations 1.3, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6, 6.5, 6.6, 7.4 & 7.5

The Every Voice Coalition (Every Voice) is a grassroots student-led organisation that addresses campus sexual violence through driving legislative reform. Every Voice works through a non-carceral feminist lens in recognising that current systems are not meeting victim-survivor needs and that new ways of responding to sexual violence are required. They develop and advocate for legislation that provides comprehensive measures to combat sexual violence and support victim-survivors studying at private, public, and community colleges and universities in the respective jurisdictions. The first state to pass Every Voice legislation was New Hampshire (Every Voice NH Act (RSA 188:H)), followed by Massachusetts (MA Every Voice Act (Ch 337)).

The work of Every Voice (reflected within the legislation they develop and pass) has five core components:

1. **Requiring institutions to increase access to and options for supportive resources for victim-survivors.** Every Voice has initiated universities and rape crisis centres to create memorandum of understanding so students can easily access local rape crisis centres.
2. **Requiring institutions to create an amnesty policy.** Amnesty policies ensure that students are not punished for 'breaking the rules' when reporting sexual violence as a victim-survivor or bystander, such as for underage drinking or drug use.
3. **Requiring institutions to hire a confidential resource advisor** (who is not a mandatory reporter). These advisors support victim-survivors and provide them with information about their options moving forward, such as for reporting and other support like emergency accommodation.
4. **Requiring institutions to deliver annual prevention and response training** to students, staff and faculty, including specific information about the resources available. There is also an extra requirement that faculty and staff receive trauma-informed training so they are equipped to respond to students who disclose to them.
5. **Requiring universities to administer a campus climate survey** (sexual violence prevalence and monitoring survey) every two years, to be sent out to every student. This data must be published on their public website and stored in a central repository. This survey should capture more than just the prevalence of harm occurring on campus and ask questions about the resources students are accessing for support and how they experienced using these resources.

On top of these five core aspects of Every Voice's work, they are also developing a waiver for students who experience sexual violence and are consequently unable to meet the relevant requirements for their educational program (for example, students who must maintain a certain grade to keep their scholarship). This is an equitable waiver which would help many victim-survivors who struggle to keep on top of their studies after assault due to the ongoing effects of trauma.

From institutional betrayal to institutional courage

Dr Jennifer Freyd and Dr Sarah Harsey from the Center for Institutional Courage have identified steps institutions can take to prevent and address sexual violence in an institutional context. These steps are the ways in which institutions can demonstrate institutional courage as an alternative to institutional betrayal.

Institutions often become defensive when activists call them out for their harmful structures – similar to how most perpetrators react when they are held accountable for their behaviour. This is known as DARVO – Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender. While speaking with Freyd and Harsey, we reflected on how this reluctance is a form of institutional betrayal. Specifically, the ways in which institutions maintain the status quo by refusing to meet demands and/or improve their practices. An alternative to this is **institutional courage**.

Freyd describes institutional courage as:

“...an institution’s commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a pledge to protect and care for those who depend on the institution. It is a compass oriented to the common good of individuals, the institution, and the world. It is a force that transforms institutions into more accountable, equitable, healthy places for everyone.”

Activism is central to pressuring institutions to implement reforms and show courage. This is particularly the case where activism is embedded in principles of solidarity, collaboration and collective action, as this brings more power and influence to those solitary activists who sometimes feel powerless to enact substantial change. The University of Michigan, University of Minnesota and University of Rhode Island are three USA universities that have demonstrated institutional courage to stand up to injustice and comprehensively address sexual violence on campus. SAPAC at the University of Michigan and the Aurora Center at the University of Minnesota were established directly out of student activism in the 1980s and have not strayed away from their grassroots activist origins. Comparatively at the University of Rhode Island, Keith Labelle, Assistant Director of the URe-STANDers Bystander Intervention Program, has single-handedly fostered a culture of consent, activism and solidarity across campus.

Case study — University of Michigan

Linked to recommendations 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.8, 2.1, 2.6, 5.6 & 5.8

The University of Michigan successfully manages coordination of care and delivers wrap-around support for students who experience sexual violence. They have the sexual assault response team on campus, a health centre of health professionals, SAPAC, campus police and mental health services. All of these services are readily available on campus and regularly come together to discuss current cases, notice patterns of harm and subsequently do work to reduce these (such as drug-related sexual assault). It takes a lot of relationship building and shared values within these spaces to effectively collaborate on creating a safer community for all.

SAPAC's work focuses on four areas to bring about systemic change:

1. **Policy** to comply with national and state regulations, and establish values and standards.
2. **Prevention** using a public health model with a focus on peer-led initiatives.
3. **Response** mechanisms that are fair, clear, transparent and have a variety of options.
4. **Support** for people who have been harmed and for those who have been impacted.

Prevention

SAPAC's education and training program provides an information loop to everyone on campus. They ensure all professionals in the university system are educated on sexual violence and help them support people who have experienced harm. Through their tailored approach, SAPAC ensures that all their work is relevant to the people it is serving and provides them with the specific knowledge, tools and strategies to put their learning into practice if an incident or disclosure occurs. SAPAC also trains more than 150 student volunteers each year to get involved in the operations of SAPAC and its programs.

SAPAC runs various peer-led prevention programs that are tailored to different student cohorts and settings:

- **Graduate Research, Outreach, Workshops and Evaluation (GROWE)** – workshops specific to graduate students focused on connecting research to practice.
- **Michigan Men** – a program designed to engage men in the work with a focus on healthy masculinity.
- **Raise The Bar** – a program that teaches bar staff (i.e. servers, bouncers, bartenders) about their role in bystander intervention and equips them with skills to intervene safely.
- **Survivor Empowerment and Ally Support (SEAS)** – events where victim-survivors and their supporters can come together to share their stories without judgement. Victim-survivors can remain anonymous and have a SAPAC staff or student read their story on their behalf.

Response

SAPAC employs three graduate student interns (who generally study social work) to do similar work as a SAPAC case manager, although with extra training and support. SAPAC's role is to provide confidential advocates for people who use their service. Alongside this individual support work, SAPAC runs a 24/7 crisis line. There is a menu of reporting options available following an experience of sexual violence, inclusive of a civil investigation process or restorative mediation process. Responses also include the option to remain anonymous, noting that anonymous reporting limits the outcomes that can be achieved by the university.

Support

In the same way they have various prevention programs, SAPAC runs various peer-led support groups that are tailored to experiences and identity groups, such as for victim-survivors of colour and LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. Each of these support groups are led by two paid student-staff with a professional staff supervisor. They develop a weekly supervision plan for the group, debrief and have a focus on professional development.

SAPAC's initiatives are student-led because it is important to hold onto the spirit of the organisation as being started by students by empowering students along the way.

“

We have to have meaningful in-person engagement with students. It's not good enough to say 'university is too late'.

”



– **Anne Huhman**, Director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) at the University of Michigan, USA.

Case study — University of Minnesota

Linked to recommendations 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.6, 5.2 & 5.7

The University of Minnesota's Aurora Center delivers holistic advocacy, prevention and support services for the whole university community surrounding sexual violence and related harms. They have four pillars of work:

1. **Direct service** to victim-survivors, including crisis counselling, advocacy and support to access the criminal justice system or medical system.
2. **Prevention education** that is underpinned by a public health model and an anti-oppressive framework.
3. **Volunteer leadership program** to upskill students to assist with the Center's programs.
4. **Policy** reform at the state, institution and campus levels.

The Aurora Center employs student-staff to work directly with students in their direct service stream and assist with administration of the Center's activities. Outside of the Center's paid staff, many student volunteers work across all streams. The Center also hires people based on their student activist efforts. Rather than viewing student activists as people to avoid, they recognise them as experts in their own right and seek to learn from them.

Katie Eichele and her team spoke about how they work closely with the student governing body and support them with their initiatives. They see the value in collaboration across campus to ensure that all parts of campus are aware of their services and resources, and know that support is available. While the Aurora Center supports initiatives by student activists, they are more directly involved in individual and systemic advocacy as they are a part of the university system. They foster positive relationships that are built on trust, communication and expectation setting.

The Aurora Center also believes in the power of storytelling and amplifying student victim-survivors' voices to create change at scale. They connect victim-survivors with senior leaders of the university to share their stories publicly, with Aurora Center staff and volunteers by their side. This is a part of the university's commitment to listen to victim-survivors and change the culture for the better.

Boynton Health also works alongside the Aurora Center to deliver prevention activities within the University of Minnesota. Their prevention education initiatives are delivered both online and in-person, and are catered to different high priority groups across campus.

These include:

1. **Prevention Advocates Program** – fraternity and sorority members who lead sexual assault prevention workshops on consent, bystander intervention, supporting victim-survivors and other relevant topics for members of their local chapter. The program is also introducing more content on sexual agency, sexual wellbeing, conversations on the role sex plays in peoples' lives and how hook up culture can dictate the way students engage in sex.
2. **Healthy Norm Promotion Program** – supporting students to do peer-to-peer outreach in setting positive social norms, such as respect for others and believing victim-survivors as standard (with a particular focus on intersectionality and LGBTIQ+ needs).
3. **Science-based Treatment, Accountability, and Risk Reduction for Sexual Assault (STARRSA) Active Psychoeducation (AP) Program** – an evidence-informed initiative to work with students who perpetrate sexual violence. The program acts as a training course designed for people who have been found accountable through an internal investigative or restorative justice process to prevent perpetration, and is assigned to students as a form of educational sanction following their conduct.

The University of Minnesota has an undergraduate student government sexual assault taskforce which works closely with Boynton Health and the Aurora Center. The taskforce creates an advocacy agenda each year to implement needed changes, such as medical amnesty policies (protection for people seeking medical assistance even if they engaged in illegal activity).

“
We're proud of the team we've created and the relationships we've built.
”



– **Katie Eichele**, Director, **Bronte Stewart-New**, Legal Advocacy Coordinator, **Alexa Paleka**, Prevention Program Coordinator, **Chloe Vraney**, Associate Director, and **Demi Adediran**, Men's Engagement Coordinator, at the Aurora Center at the University of Minnesota, USA.

Case study — University of Rhode Island

Linked to recommendations 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9 & 2.1

The URi-STANDers Bystander Intervention Program at the University of Rhode Island empowers students from across all facets of campus to stand together against all forms of sexual violence. Keith Labelle, who developed and leads the program, approaches this work by building trust and mutual respect with the whole community including with students, staff, other sector organisations and the broader community.

His comprehensive approach to prevention includes:

1. **Four university classes** – two that are focused on sexual violence, one on public speaking and the internship program. One of these courses, CSV 302: Bystander Intervention Training, has been described as a class that changes lives. It teaches students about sexual and gender-based violence in the USA and internationally, including relevant laws, facts and statistics. Throughout the semester, students engage in weekly journals, readings, class discussions, independent research, exams and an action project where they have to complete a practical activity, such as a social media campaign or presentation, outside of class to an audience of at least 25 people. This holistic approach to learning subject matter that is not usually taught in higher education allows students to engage in self-reflection about their own ideas of gender and violence, and undergo intensive and meaningful self-examination. Instead of using standard assignment grading, Labelle implements a 'points' system where students receive credit based on action to educate the community. This includes giving presentations, being on shift at a URi-STANDers booth, attending meetings and completing action projects. This points system rewards students who turn up and commit to the process of prevention – which includes being present, active, engaged and committed.
2. **URi-STANDers internship program** – a two semester course available to students who have completed Labelle's CSV 302 course. URiSTANDers is an action-oriented initiative that empowers students to gain skills in how to prevent and respond to all forms of violence on and off campus. Through positive role-modelling and collective action, interns become a part of a leadership team that assists Labelle with teaching, mentoring, training and research of students undertaking his classes and the wider community. Interns not only engage in education and awareness-raising, but are also trained to be able to provide support, resources and referrals to victim-survivors of sexual violence. This peer support and mentoring element of the role contributes to a community of care and support after people have already experienced harm. Interns earn points each semester by participating in activities related to violence prevention. For example, interns earn five points per workshop facilitation, two points per office hour and four points for each hour completed staffing a booth. To date, more than 300 students (100 of those being men) have completed the URi-STANDers Internship Program.

3. **Educational talks and training sessions** – all-year-round, Labelle and the URi-STANDers group are available to deliver educational talks and training sessions to all parts of the university. Each semester, he and his student-interns regularly provide educational sessions to staff, faculty and students to promote a community that is safe, secure and free from sexual misconduct. Each student in athletics programs must do a session each year, and all Teaching Assistants must receive bystander intervention training. The aim is for each first-year student to have participated in a minimum of three sexual violence prevention initiatives, facilitated by members of the URiSTANDers program, by the end of their first semester.
4. **Community building** – all of the work that Labelle and his students do throughout the year is widely promoted and highly visible across campus. This is done not only by focusing on large events, but also by ensuring that the URi-STANDers messaging is visible to all students. Displaying this messaging at most events (including induction sessions, plays, movie nights, sporting events), by having their merch widely available, and Labelle's office being located in the Athletics Centre has resulted in a recognisable brand. Everyone on campus knows about the program and who the URi-STANDers Interns are.

URi-STANDers students I spoke to, Nadia, Shawn and Drew, spoke about how much they had learned during Labelle's classes and their realisation of how desensitised they were to daily acts of violence and discrimination. As a result of learning from Labelle, they have all become invested in and passionate about advocating for a more safe and equal society through regular individual actions.

The class lays the groundwork for them to be activists, then with the action project they have to be activists.



– **Keith Labelle**, Assistant Director of the Bystander Intervention Program, URi-STANDers, and students **Drew**, **Nadia** and **Shawn**, at the University of Rhode Island, USA.

Examples of the core principles for effective prevention

I spoke with a number of victim-survivor advocates, activists, experts, researchers and practitioners who are national leaders in the prevention of sexual violence in universities across the USA. A key theme that emerged across my conversations was how important it is for activists and institutions to work together to prevent campus sexual violence. This partnership-building and collaboration is especially important for those working outside of the university system but trying to influence change within it. From my travels in the USA, four of the core principles were consistently embedded by the people I spoke to. These were the need for prevention to be **comprehensive**, **collaborative**, **intersectional** and **anti-oppressive**.

Comprehensive

Dr Alan Berkowitz

Dr Alan Berkowitz is a leading prevention expert and independent consultant who helps colleges, universities, public health agencies and communities design programs that address health and social justice issues, such as sexual violence. Berkowitz talks about how successful prevention programs must be comprehensive, intensive, relevant, be data driven and include positive messaging. Prevention is not just about a program or initiative, says Berkowitz, it is about the process. He was a consultant on the online *Consent Matters* module that has been rolled out at Australian universities, and emphasised that some universities may have taken the module and used it as a way to 'solve' the problem. But no one program will solve any problem – and this module is not sufficient.

Berkowitz explained that what universities must do is implement a comprehensive range of synergistic, mutually reinforcing components. For example, in one semester there could be the *Consent Matters* module, a follow up in-person workshop, then an event with a panel of speakers and further education on the issue. Berkowitz also explained that in the development of any prevention activities, universities need to engage with prevention experts, activists, advocates, victim-survivors, students, and local services in the university's community across health, education, government, policy and advocacy. This is so they can form connected, respectful and collaborative partnerships to address sexual violence on campus.

Collaborative

Our Wave

International organisation Our Wave seeks to share victim-survivor stories from across the world. Our Wave's storytelling platform is an anonymous community of victim-survivors. Its purpose is to build community, support storytelling as healing, create a body of stories to generate data, provide educational resources for victim-survivors, and support reform and advocacy initiatives. This platform is an example of a survivor-led community of care (albeit online and at a very large scale). It is a supportive community where care is embedded through design.

By co-designing policies and procedures with the people they directly affect, inclusive of victim-survivors, marginalised students and activists, institutions can start to build trust amongst the community. Beyond this, institutions can create cultures of safety by implementing these policies through genuine action. Victim-survivors already hold a lot of distrust in the institutions and services that are meant to protect and support them, such as universities, police and hospitals. If these sectors were resourced with people who care and who are properly supported to prevent burnout and vicarious trauma (including by ensuring they are not intimidated or controlled by their institution), there would likely be less harm being done to victim-survivors they interact with, and the sector could achieve sustainable and lasting positive reforms.

End Rape On Campus

End Rape On Campus (EROC) is a national organisation working to end campus sexual violence through support, education and policy reform, centring historically excluded and systemically marginalised student victim-survivors. One of their core projects is their Campus Accountability Map and Tool, which allows students and their communities to compare prevalence statistics, student safety policies and support services offered on campuses. This tool empowers current and prospective students, victim-survivors and their communities with the ability to view in-depth information on each institution's sexual assault investigation policies, prevention efforts and support resources. It also includes high-level statistics on definitions, training, sanctions and investigations. The map allows users to compare these metrics between universities and gain a better understanding of what policies look like across the nation through a user-friendly interface. The development of this tool was led by more than 150 volunteers – mostly students, victim-survivors and advocates – to crowdsource and factcheck the data.

Intersectional

Nicole Bedera

Nicole Bedera is a sociologist studying how the issue of sexual violence extends beyond the people directly involved in a sexual assault. Her work focuses on how social structures, organisations and culture create a world where violence is predictable and normalised. Bedera is explicit in calling out how universities continue to ignore intimate partner violence, which can lead to students being murdered or dying by suicide. Failing to address sexual violence and related harms (such as intimate partner violence) in an intersectional and all-encompassing way is like treating all victim-survivors as a monolith – it is a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Universities also fail to acknowledge varied forms of violence between different student and staff groups, especially sexual harassment perpetrated by staff (usually senior faculty) towards graduate students. The harassment and exploitation of graduate students is often ignored as many initiatives on campus tend to focus on first-year undergraduate students. This fails to safeguard the student population from harm or acknowledge the abuse being perpetrated by those in power.

Bedera spoke about how universities continue to fail their students and staff by dismissing concerns of violence and harm on campus and ignoring the experiences of many who they don't see as worthy of their time (particularly students of colour, LGBTIQ+ students and students with disability). In many instances, universities are institutions that elicit white supremacist ideology in how they approach sexual violence. Universities and academia are generally patriarchal institutions that protect and favour power for white, privileged people. My discussion with Bedera made me think about how the concept of intersectionality is thrown around by university administrators as one of their ‘core values’, while they fail to proactively acknowledge privilege on campus and how this plays out in sexual violence cases – the most basic step to being intersectional. Bedera's research shows that to be intersectional in practice, there must be proactive acknowledgement of white privilege and white supremacy within institutions, followed by intersectional solutions to address campus sexual violence.

Anti-oppressive

Sexual Violence Prevention Association

SVPA is an abolitionist, anti-professional and anti-hierarchical organisation dedicated to systemically preventing sexual violence. SVPA does all of their work through an anti-oppressive lens; in how they conduct themselves, how they prioritise work and how they do their work. Specifically, Omny Miranda Martone, Founder of SVPA, explained how many organisations focus their prevention efforts on increasing pathways for victim-survivors to report to the police and for perpetrators to get prison time, such as through information, awareness, education and crisis support.

Martone explained two fatal flaws with this focus on police and prisons as the solution to sexual violence:

- There is an assumption that reporting to police will always lead to conviction and justice for the victim-survivor (which is not the case).
- The focus on criminalisation and incarceration of perpetrators, without support for behaviour change, results in higher rates of sexual violence within prison environments (the victims of which are already disenfranchised).

This is why SVPA's approach to systemic prevention focuses on perpetration through an anti-oppressive lens by seeking to change sexually violent attitudes and behaviours before they start. The SVPA team are anti-oppressive in how they go beyond intersecting identities of individuals and start looking towards systems and environments. They do this by working on developing policies for prevention through research and collecting and aggregating data on effective primary prevention within institutions.

Effective sexual violence prevention within institutions requires the rejection of patriarchal ideas of 'professionalism' that seek to further oppress the oppressed. Martone spoke about how professionalism is ableist, racist, classist and unnecessarily constraining. Professionalism only values some people's experiences and this should not inhibit someone's ability to do the work. In the pursuit of maintaining privilege, organisations can make people who do not meet their professional standards feel uncomfortable. Martone rejects the idea of professionalism and specifically runs their organisation through an anti-professional lens, which is anti-oppressive. Additionally, institutions may also use misleading messaging about their organisations being safe for people from diverse backgrounds in order to make themselves look intersectional. This is why SVPA is anti-hierarchical considering that the way organisations enforce hierarchies reinforces patriarchal and colonial norms.

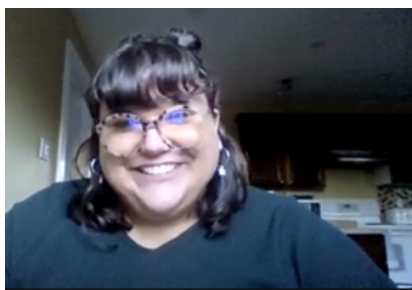
***“You’re not going to convince your oppressor to stop oppressing you and give you more privilege - it’s a relic of white feminism in [that] ‘they should be grateful we are doing something about it’.*”**



– **Nicole Badera**, Sociologist Researcher, Co-Founder of Beyond Compliance, and Affiliate Educator at the Center for Institutional Courage, USA.

Experiences and Findings:

Canada



Overview

3 weeks

25 formal interviews with 30 people

Discussions with people from 5 provinces:

British Columbia

Manitoba

Ontario

Nova Scotia

New Brunswick

1 workshop



Key learnings

My visit to Canada gave me a comprehensive overview of how sexual violence prevention, response and support can be addressed from different parts of the university system (particularly student unions and the broader formal institution). The investment in comprehensive and meaningful prevention from different parts of the university, and their commitment to filling gaps in each other's services, is phenomenal.

The university staff, practitioners, researchers and experts I interviewed had a clear focus on promoting accountability, building restorative communities and reducing harm. This has come about in the form of investment in specific prevention, intervention and response programs targeted towards men and perpetrators of violence, and meaningful efforts to change their behaviour. This commitment to prevention by addressing the root causes of sexual violence is limited in the Australian context. As universities are so reluctant to implement these types of programs, it is worth exploring options for Australian governments to establish pools of funding to support new initiatives.

Students in Canada also have a focus on building restorative communities in their efforts to create peer support networks and movements of care. While they can be difficult to maintain, building movements that are sustainable is key to creating safer communities – as without activists doing the groundwork, institutions won't reform harmful systems. This is how sexual violence can be prevented in the long-term – by lifting up students and activists to lead – as this will ultimately lead to better outcomes for all.

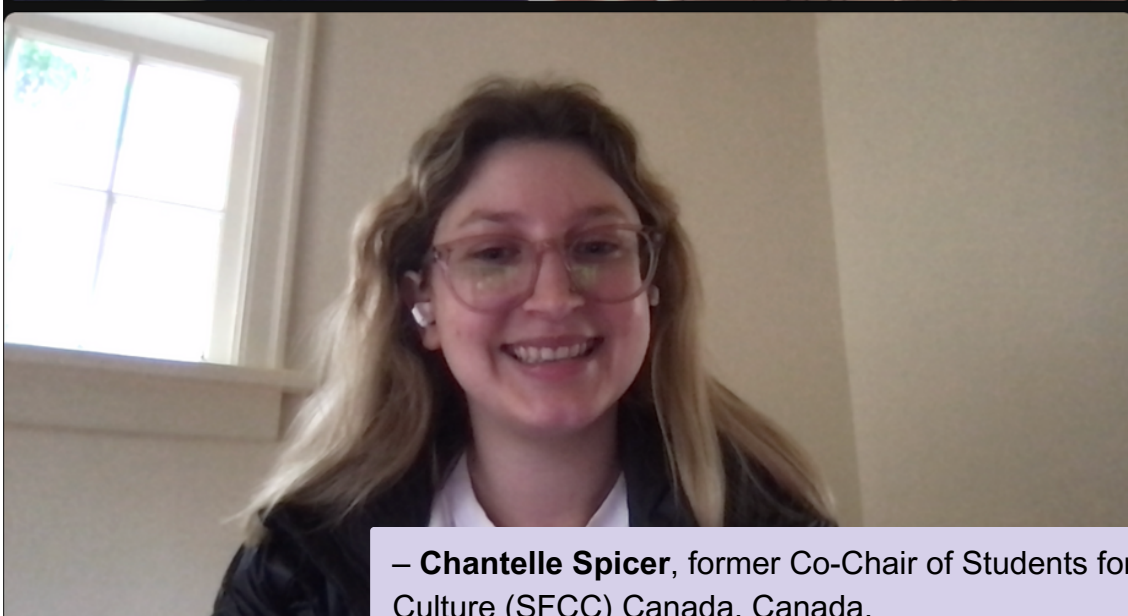
Student activists play an important role in Canada in how they lead collective action to influence university administrators and lobby governments to legislate change. Student activists have lobbied for legislative changes to address universities failing to develop clear policies for sexual violence on campus. This focus by activists to work with governments to hold universities accountable has led to positive change across the sector. Many universities in Australia fail to do the bare minimum to prevent and respond to sexual violence, such as developing clear best-practice policies and making them available to students. Establishing a legal framework would ensure that all tertiary education institutions, particularly residential halls and student accommodation, are accountable and incentivised to develop and implement clear and consistent sexual violence policies.

My conversations across Canada have reinforced how important it is to build connections and networks to gain more collective power. This in turn, allows for greater influence on institutions and governments. I am so grateful to have connected with such strong activists in Canada during our efforts to build an international collective network of victim-survivors and activists creating substantial change in their local communities.

“

It's not like I came into post-secondary education to become an anti-violence activist. I came here to go to classes and get educated. After what happened to me and so many of my friends, I was forced to do this work. Now, I think of it like a beautiful obligation. I do this work because I don't want other people to experience what I did. The generosity of a community is really what drives me to do this work. That's why I show up in my work and conduct myself in ways I expect others to conduct themselves. We're not going to build the world that we want to live in by duplicating harmful organising structures.

”



– **Chantelle Spicer**, former Co-Chair of Students for Consent Culture (SFCC) Canada, Canada.

National legal and policy context

Unlike the USA, Canada does not have a Title IX equivalent. This means their universities are not forced by regulation or national law to take certain actions – nor are they limited by such legislation either. While this is similar to Australia, the Canadian Government (mostly at the provincial level) has implemented other laws and policies to oversee the university sector's sexual violence responses, whereas Australia has not.

Gender-Based Violence Program

The Canadian Government agency, Women and Gender Equality Canada, created a grant funding opportunity in 2021, titled the Gender-Based Violence Program. This program provided opportunities for organisations to apply for grants to deliver local gender-based violence prevention programs that have a targeted focus. We Worthy Women was successfully granted funding through this opportunity to establish Action Now Atlantic. This allowed them to develop and implement a consent campaign and a network of youth advocates to address the root causes of gender-based violence on university campuses. After receiving this funding, Action Now Atlantic established a Youth Advocacy Network comprising of a collective of students and recent graduates from institutions across Atlantic Canada to make change.

Case study — Courage to Act

Linked to recommendations 2.6 & 7.3

Courage to Act is a nationally funded, multi-year national project led by Possibility Seeds, a Canadian social change consultancy dedicated to gender justice, equity, human rights and inclusion. It has developed key reports in consultation with students and activist groups that are significant to Canada's reform agenda.

1. *Courage to Act: Developing a National Framework to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions* – provides promising practices, key policy areas and prevention plans as the foundation of a framework to address and prevent gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions in Canada.
2. *Our Campus, Our Safety: Student Leaders' Action Plan for Institutions and Governments to Address and Prevent Sexual Violence on Campus* – provides ten comprehensive evidence-based calls to action for both post-secondary institutions and governments to meaningfully address campus sexual violence.

With a network of experts, Courage to Act develops tools, resources and strategies as the first collaborative national project of its kind.

Case study — Students for Consent Culture Canada

Linked to recommendations 3.1, 3.4 & 6.7

Students for Consent Culture (SFCC) Canada is a grassroots organisation dedicated to supporting anti-sexual violence advocacy and activism in universities. One of the main purposes of SFCC is to serve as a hub of institutional memory for students on campuses across the country. This entails collating information and resources so that students can learn about the activism that occurred before them. This is important because of the high rate of student turnover and the way that administrators can use this against students to delay action. This is particularly relevant to students with positions in their student union, as they often join the movement in a very active way but for the short period of their term (usually nine months to one year).

SFCC has three main portfolios:

1. **Education**, which includes the creation of training, popular education materials, research and reports for students to access and use on their campuses.
2. **Outreach**, which includes mobilising and facilitating connections between student groups and other organisations, as well as the work of 'grading' sexual violence policies in collaboration with student groups.
3. **Advocacy**, which includes researching to support reforms and advocating for institutions and governments to implement systemic changes at the campus, provincial and national levels.

SFCC generated significant impact with their *OurTurn National Action Plan*, a national student-led action plan to end campus sexual violence. This National Action Plan came out just a few days before #MeToo in 2017. In early 2016, there was a group of students organising against campus sexual violence in Quebec, specifically at Concordia University and McGill University, in response to some high-profile cases of student athletes and professors perpetrating sexual violence. This organising on the lack of institutional policies and processes to address sexual violence led to SFCC members developing the National Action Plan. The Plan included a 'scorecard' which graded Canadian universities according to how they were responding to sexual violence and the scorecard eventually gained national attention. In response, some universities started to fill the gaps that had been identified.

When speaking with university staff and student union representatives, the OurTurn National Action Plan was specifically mentioned for its impact on university action to address sexual violence. For example, Lyndsay Anderson, the Sexualised Violence Advisor at Dalhousie University, spoke about how SFCC's scorecard system helped drive improvement at Dalhousie University. This leveraging of activist reports calling out Dalhousie University amongst others has acted as a catalyst for change across the university sector.

Provincial legal and policy context

Frontline support service workers and student activists told me how important external activism is at a provincial level. It sets up student activists with levers to pull for their institutions to take them seriously. It also demonstrates that there is a need for political pressure to spotlight universities and to uplift student victim-survivor activists along the way to create these sorts of structural changes.

British Columbia

As a direct result of student activism, the *Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act* came into force in 2017. This British Columbia law requires all publicly funded universities to have policies related to sexualised violence (albeit without accountability mechanisms). The Government of British Columbia also established a provincial advisory group, which includes student representatives, community organisations, government representatives and other experts. Although this policy only enforces universities to meet minimal requirements to address sexual violence on campus, it still ensures that all universities have policies that set the standard of conduct and expectations of when misconduct occurs.

At the University of British Columbia, the Investigations Office and the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) were established to meet the requirements of the Act. As a result, the Investigations Office produces annual sexual violence reports, and they provide support to student victim-survivors to understand the university's sexual violence policy, available processes, potential outcomes and the length of time these processes may take. SVPRO provides support to students, faculty and staff, and delivers prevention education programs on consent culture, being an upstander, inequity and power dynamics, the neurobiology of trauma and how to support victim-survivors.

At the University of Victoria, the Conflict Engagement and Investigations team was established within the Equity and Human Rights office to develop and implement a sexualised violence policy following the introduction of the Act. This team is a centralised office providing consistent messaging to students, staff and faculty about preventing and responding to campus sexual violence. They created a 'one-door' model with all services in the same unit and the same procedures apply to students, staff and faculty. The Equity and Human Rights office also releases annual reporting of their initiatives, priorities and ongoing response work.

At Simon Fraser University, the Sexual Violence Support and Prevention Office (SVSPO) was established to create a standalone sexualised violence policy. The Director, CJ Rowe, took on the responsibility to develop a policy co-designed with students, particularly victim-survivors and activists. They believe the creation of the university's Sexual Violence and Misconduct Prevention, Education and Support Policy was through one of the most engaged policy development processes with students across the sector. Student activists at Simon Fraser University were an integral part of the collaboration; they actively participated in the process and attended the feedback sessions SVSPO led in high numbers.

Grassroots student-led organisation, SFCC, authored a report titled Moving Beyond Potential: Building Justice for Students in British Columbia. This report critiques the Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act and provides 11 essential minimum standards to better address the needs of student victim-survivors and create safer campuses across British Columbia. While the current legislation has been effective in bringing all British Columbia universities up to a minimum standard, SFCC's advocacy demonstrates that there is more work to be done to further improve university practices.

Nova Scotia

The Provincial Government of Nova Scotia has a Memorandum of Understanding with its ten universities in which all parties agree to support the advancement of strategic priorities related to the prevention of sexual violence and other issues. Within this, the Government of Nova Scotia has a pot of funding for prevention work that universities can apply for.

At Dalhousie University, the provincial government funds two student-staff positions in their Office for Equity and Inclusion to lead the facilitation of their bystander intervention training program, Waves of Change. This program teaches participants to recognise a broad range of sexually violent scenarios that commonly occur on post-secondary campuses and how to intervene as bystanders or as a community. The aim is for participants to feel equipped to interrupt or stop sexual violence, support victim-survivors, hold accountable those who cause harm and transform the culture that allows violence to happen. The Office for Equity and Inclusion at Dalhousie University also utilised this funding for a new program, Man|Made, a five-week psycho-educational group for male students. This program involves weekly facilitated conversations and peer modelling around healthy masculinity and sexuality. They have also hired someone to work with perpetrators to promote accountability and prevent reoffending.

Restorative justice approaches to sexual violence

Victim-survivors who report or disclose to their university can often be met with shame, stigma and further harm. This form of betrayal by a university can cause victim-survivors to be re-traumatised and feel unsafe. The detrimental impacts this can have on someone can be significant, and in some cases life-ending. In many higher education institutions, it is highly problematic how sexual violence thrives due to the lack of intervention and accountability placed on perpetrators. This stems from the idea that a criminal threshold of evidence is required within a university context – the ‘innocent until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt’ narrative – when it is not. Students, victim-survivors, activists, experts and researchers have been calling on universities to adopt more restorative approaches to address sexual violence in university settings as an alternative to current models.

Restorative justice focuses on the connection and relationships between people. It is a person-centred approach to understanding and responding to the needs of affected individuals and communities.

The core principles of a restorative approach, as identified by the [Restorative Research, Innovation and Education Lab \(RRIELab\)](#) at Dalhousie University emphasise:

- inclusive, participatory and collaborative ways of working
- building just and sustainable connections across existing silos and divisions
- supporting integrative and holistic responses to complex social issues
- problem-solving, forward-focused orientation to innovation for social change.

I spoke to Dr [Brenda Morrison](#), Director of the [Centre for Restorative Justice](#) at Simon Fraser University, about restorative justice in the sexual violence context. Morrison believes that we need to build a culture of consent that promotes healthy relationships, reasonable expectations and boundaries of each other alongside restorative responses. A way to normalise healthy relationships and discussions is through engaging in a circle process (restorative process where everyone involved is invited to share openly and build, or rebuild, trust with each other), or another action which builds community. These sorts of community-building activities bring people together to have safe and honest conversations with their peers, which can lead to an increased sense of safety and lower risk of reoffending.

Morrison shared with me her perspective of creating cultures of safety within a university context. She spoke about how universities are very task-oriented institutions operating in a transactional framework – *if you do well in my class then I'll give you good marks*. This highly performative and competitive environment doesn't keep students safe or help them thrive and it is almost impossible to implement any sort of relational practice within these fragmented colonial institutions.

Shifting that culture to become more relational is difficult, but it is possible and important to get it right in order to build more restorative communities.

Restorative justice is not a process that should just be implemented solely for responding to harm. It should be implemented in a way that also is an option for academic integrity matters – as an opportunity for students to learn, grow, take responsibility and be accountable. This is when we see restorative justice be implemented in a meaningful way in the classroom or academic contexts.

Restorative justice is one option that can be made available for when sexual violence happens, however it is not always appropriate and may not meet the needs of victim-survivors. Unfortunately, there are instances of when restorative justice processes are implemented on campus that they fail to be survivor-centred or trauma-informed. This was the experience of Micah Kalisch, Founder of Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy, Response, for Survivors (PEARS) Project, a trauma-informed initiative led by students at the University of Toronto. Most of her PEARS team believe that there is so much potential for restorative justice practices to be done well and to achieve better outcomes for all involved. However, when restorative justice is delivered poorly, it is difficult to consider other options to address students who perpetrate violence and promote accountability.

For someone navigating the institutional space, community care – a central element to building restorative communities – is more than just individualistic counselling sessions or meetings with a case manager in a university sexual violence office. It is about a person feeling like they have wrap-around support in a way that is responsive to their needs and that they can identify this community of care. Universities are colonial, fear-based institutions and there is a lot of culture change to do. Restorative justice is just one part of the puzzle to change these institutions through growing a culture of consent and restorative processes.

“

Restorative justice should not be implemented as an alternative to retribution.

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– **Dr Brenda Morrison**, Director of the Centre for Restorative Justice at Simon Fraser University, Canada.

Case study — Restorative Research, Innovation and Education Lab at Dalhousie University

Linked to recommendations 5.3, 6.11 & 6.12

RRIELab is a hub for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to come to learn, explore and expand new applications for a restorative approach. It acts as a virtual hub to connect people internationally as well as a physical lab for researchers, partners and communities to convene and work together.

Jennifer Llewellyn, Director of RRIELab, and Associates, Melissa MacKay and Jake MacIsaac, were a part of the team that facilitated a restorative justice process at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Dentistry in 2015 to address climate (perceptions about 'how it feels' to work there) and culture within the faculty. This process was in response to female dentistry students filing complaints under the university's Sexual Harassment Policy after they became aware of their male colleagues posting offensive misogynistic, sexist and homophobic material about them in a private Facebook group. The team's Final Report, which details the restorative justice approach that was implemented in response to these behaviours, is an example of how restorative approaches can be used to address harmful behaviours within an institutional setting.

Llewellyn described the approach to the dentistry incident as deeply connected to feminist relational theory. Feminist relational theory talks about how relationships with people, institutions, networks and structures shape our experiences and behaviours of power and oppression. In this way, restorative justice aims to work across all places and spaces with the whole community and at all societal levels, rather than just focusing on one area. Llewellyn spoke about campuses as 'communities' and emphasised the need to build strong, healthy learning communities rather than focusing solely on the campus' response to sexual violence. This is the idea that all members of the community must be part of the solution to build healthy and safe communities, including those who commit harm.

The 'monster lurking in the shadows' narrative that continues to thrive is not helpful and is an easy way out for people to look away and not address the issue head on. Institutions often don't want to believe that their system and culture facilitate this behaviour. However, campus communities are complex systems that create systemic, cultural and relational norms that underpin these violent behaviours as normal. This is why Llewellyn, through RRIELab, is trying to be proactive rather than reactive by working with partners to try new ideas and put evidence into action quickly.

While relational theory underpins a restorative approach to addressing harm, this relationship-building is something that institutions tend not to do well, if at all. In recognition of this institutional barrier to embedding restorative approaches within the system, Llewellyn spoke about the importance of building coalitions. Through coalitions of people working through a relational and restorative lens, this can build policies, programs and procedures based on restorative principles. RRIELab advocates for restorative justice principles and objectives to be in all spaces at university – inclusive of the classroom, security and residences.

“

If we don't create a culture where people do put their hand up and say, 'I think I caused harm', then we have failed.

”

Restorative Research, Innovation and Education Lab



– **Jennifer Llewellyn**, Director of the Restorative Research, Innovation and Education Lab (RRIELab), Associates **Melissa MacKay**, restorative justice practitioner, and **Jake MacIsaac**, Assistant Director of Security Services, at Dalhousie University, Canada.

Transformative justice

Jenn Krogfoss and Anna-Elaine Rempel, former workers at the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), are strong believers in transformative justice and that everyone is capable of causing harm and changing their behaviour. While restorative justice is aimed at repairing or restoring an individual after experiencing harm, transformative justice aims to transform the relationships, societal and institutional structures that allowed the violence to occur. Transformative justice recognises the intersections of people's identities and experiences that may contribute to their choice to cause harm to another person. If people are willing to learn (or unlearn) why they commit violence, then there is an opportunity to ensure they do not do it again.

There are many layers of accountability for perpetrators, such as a genuine apology and commitment of steps they will take to change their behaviour. Krogfoss and Rempel make it clear that safety for victim-survivors and the community always comes first. If a perpetrator is not willing to be accountable for their actions and change their behaviour, then safety measures need to be put in place (such as removal from the university and/or residential hall). Transformative justice requires people to engage voluntarily, which is a barrier to overcome as many people are not willing to reflect on their actions and be responsible for what they have done to another person.

Krogfoss and Rempel spoke about how the typical response of removal as the only option for perpetrators of violence becomes a form of rejection and shame that the perpetrator may not respond well to. This punitive approach equates the entire person and their identity to the heinous act they committed, when the situation is usually much more complex.

Having restorative and/or transformative approaches is decolonial within a colonial system and helps to build an inclusive community where everyone is valued, connected and engaged.

“We view humans as non-disposable and capable of change. We do not treat people as disposable.”



– **Anna-Elaine Rempel**, Volunteer Organiser, and **Jenn Krogfoss**, Support Coordinator, at the Anti-Violence Project (AVP) at the University of Victoria, Canada.

Examples of the core principles for effective prevention

I spoke with a number of victim-survivor advocates, activists, experts, researchers and practitioners who are national leaders in the prevention of sexual violence in university communities across Canada. A key theme that emerged across my conversations was how important it is for institutions and governments to listen to victim-survivors and activists and respect them as experts of their own experiences. This sort of connection and community building is especially important for those developing prevention initiatives to ensure it is peer-led, survivor-led and trauma-informed so it meets the needs of the community. From my travels in Canada, five of the core principles were consistently embedded in the work of the people I spoke to. These were the need for prevention to be **collaborative**, **trauma-informed**, **anti-oppressive**, **feminist** and **person-centred** for it to be effective.

Collaborative

REES

REES (which stands for Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors) is an accessible and secure online platform for reporting sexual violence, which can be tailored to the unique setting of post-secondary institutions. Trauma-informed and centred on the needs of victim-survivors, REES bridges online incident reporting with access to critical information about reporting options, resources and support. The REES platform embeds anonymity, security, data selection transparency and access into its design. It was developed in consultation with victim-survivors, law enforcement, sexual assault nurses, police, administrators, legal experts and frontline workers, and this collaboration remains ongoing. This collaborative approach to working alongside community partners helps them to link reporting victim-survivors to their support and report options in a seamless and informative way. As REES is led by people with expertise in addressing gender-based violence, it has embedded trauma-informed design to ensure it is easy to use. For example, when someone makes an account to use the platform, it saves progress on each page so that people can log out and back in. This allows people to tell their story in their own time and their own way.

A standout initiative of REES is their Youth Advisory Board, which comprises of students who are victim-survivors, advocates and activists. The Youth Advisory Board demonstrates their commitment to amplifying the voices of young people with different perspectives and opinions across the diverse landscape of Canada. REES also builds partnerships across the country so they can shape the platform to the unique context of each jurisdiction. This allows them to better meet the needs of each individual campus. Some universities already have policies or education programs in place, so they need less education from REES.

For smaller campuses with less resources, the REES team invests more time to build their capacity and educate staff on how to use the platform. They seek to create continuity across people and spaces through reporting so that there is consistency across the country.

The REES platform has adopted the language of mitigating risk and minimising harm, which more closely aligns with the needs and interests of institutions (making the platform more palatable and incentivising for institutions to adopt). Niko Coady, Partner Success Coordinator, meets with university staff and students to educate them about REES. She spoke about how powerful it is to see communities transform when REES is utilised. The REES team have been able to initiate a series of impactful changes across spaces and with people who have never even talked or thought about the issue of sexual violence and reporting.

Trauma-informed

Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy, Response, for Survivors Project

The PEARS Project is a trauma-informed initiative led by students at the University of Toronto. It is a grassroots coalition of students that provides support and resources to victim-survivors of sexual violence across the university. Micah Kalisch leads the organisation using trauma-informed and survivor-centred principles such as autonomy, consent, equity, mutual aid, support and care. She also recognises the importance of uplifting victim-survivors as leaders so their views can inform policy change at the university. As a result, she built a coalition of people passionate about supporting victim-survivors and advocating for better policies on sexual violence response processes.

When campaigning for safer, more trauma-informed support for victim-survivors at the University of Toronto, PEARS released a video, Surviving the Centre, which contains statements made by victim-survivors of sexual violence who have attempted to access support on campus. These statements mention gender-based and sexual violence, rape culture, gaslighting, assault perpetrated by a professor, institutional negligence and barriers to accessing support. One of the purposes of this was to demonstrate the ways people had experienced further harm when seeking assistance from the university, and to demonstrate how to support victim-survivors in a trauma-informed way.

With this lack of trauma-informed and appropriate support in place for students, Kalisch decided to focus her efforts on establishing a peer support service through PEARS with training by a local sexual violence support service. The PEARS team provides information to people about their options for support and reporting after assault, and advocates for policy changes at the university.

Kalisch and her team seek to minimise hierarchies as much as possible so as not to reproduce the harmful structures of the university system. The PEARS Project practises trauma-informed care in how they promote self-care and community care for all volunteers to reduce burnout. This work can feel constant and draining – especially when coming up against an institution that refuses to take them seriously. This is why Kalisch has been advocating for PEARS to be embedded more formally within the institution so their support services can be more formalised and long-lasting.

Anti-oppressive

Students for Consent Culture Canada

SFCC is a grassroots organisation dedicated to supporting anti-sexual violence advocacy and activism on campuses across Canada.

SFCC's former Chair, Chantelle Spicer, identified her largest inspirations as Black and Indigenous theorists that are leading social movements which centre care, community and relational work. This is how Spicer seeks to 'turn up' as an activist. In her view, genuine and meaningful relationship building with victim-survivors, activists, advocates and community organisations should be a number one priority for universities to take accountability and reduce future harm. However, this is rarely the case. This is why Spicer and the SFCC team build peer support networks of mutual aid and community care which institutions often fail to provide. Students should not be solely responsible for having to provide care and support for students following assault, but it is the reality. This is also the case in Australia where informal peer support networks are built amongst student communities to supplement the lack of care provided formally. Spicer describes this care as essential while also advocating for universities to take on this load in a meaningful way.

Spicer spoke about how there can be a real tendency to treat everything like a checkbox, in instances like working on a report or organising who will be a speaker on a panel. It then becomes about diversity and inclusion through a colonial lens rather than focusing on anti-oppression. SFCC leads conversations about these tendencies and ensures their projects are actively rejecting these colonial ideologies and practices.

A way that SFCC puts their anti-oppressive value into practice is by not working with institutions. This is a firm and purposeful stance by SFCC to not work with universities because they do not see their role as to work within a colonial structure as unpaid students when administrators have resources and support at their beck and call. Spicer spoke about how they are very firm in not wanting to work within colonial structures and make resources for institutions which often get taken out of context or become co-opted for other purposes. For Spicer, this feels disingenuous and disrespectful to a lot of the student voices and views that go into SFCC's work for them to give it to an institution to co-opt as their own.

While the focus of my research has been on collaboration for greater outcomes, I understand why SFCC focuses their partnership efforts outside of the university context. Despite SFCC's stance to not work with institutions, they do work across activist and student communities, as well as community organisations, to advocate for institutional reform.

A critique Spicer has of universities when they open sexual violence support offices on campus is how they expect oppressed students, such as Indigenous students, to suddenly trust the university and use this service without actually employing Indigenous staff to rebuild relationships. Unlike other organisations that hire people whose sole job is to build these relationships with communities and organisations in their support for Indigenous victim-survivors, universities often fail to see this is necessary. The reality is that you cannot make something and then expect people who have been oppressed or harmed by institutions to show up. This relationship building is a step that universities must take so that the workers in these sexual violence offices have the capacity to build relationships in meaningful ways.

Feminist

Sexual Assault Resistance Education for University Women: The Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act Sexual Assault Resistance Program

Dr Charlene Senn created Sexual Assault Resistance Education for University Women: The Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) Sexual Assault Resistance Program, also known as the 'Flip the Script with EAAA™' program. The Flip the Script with EAAA™ program is a sexual assault resistance education program for young women. The program has been extensively researched by Senn and her team, and shown to decrease the likelihood of experiencing sexual assault in the future. Senn describes this program as a way for women to learn tools to be able to resist against a person trying to harm them.

When Senn started to develop the program, she introduced a 'positive sexuality' framework to deliver the content. This framing has allowed for women's sexual desires to be explicit, rather than the more common focus of sexuality education to be around men's desires and women being there to respond to men's requests and wants. This program is one part of a comprehensive sexual violence prevention plan that should be coupled with other initiatives that engage the whole community to create social change. This program seeks to act as a short-term solution that can make a difference in the lives of individual women, rather than achieving a systemic difference in men's behaviour.

Senn's program is one of the only sexual violence prevention programs evaluated in a randomised control trial that has produced evidence of lower rates of sexual violence.⁶

6) Senn, C., Eliasziw, M., Barata, P., Thurston., Newby-Clark, W., Radtke, L., & Hobden, K. (2015) Efficacy of a Sexual Assault Resistance Program for University Women, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 372, 2326-2335, DOI:10.1056/NEJMsa1411131.

It teaches women the real definition of sexual assault combined with physical self-defence classes. This community care based group teaches practical skills about how to protect each other, support each other and build a feminist community. As a result, participants are much less likely to blame themselves which leads their experience of sexual assault to be far less traumatic and without the associated negative self-talk that many victim-survivors go through. It provides them with a framework for acknowledging and responding to the real threats they face.

Person-centred

Security Services at Dalhousie University

Jake MacIsaac, Assistant Director of Security Services at Dalhousie University, takes a person-centred approach in his work. He does this by learning what students need and want, and then seeking to make services more coordinated and focused on these needs. MacIsaac and his team seek to foster human connections between people and the campus community, and restore choice and autonomy to the people they support. They work to understand what people need each day and focus on those needs, rather than asking people to retell their story. They also try to take this person-centred approach with perpetrators and do not paint them as monsters. While these are hard conversations to have when promoting accountability and taking measures to keep victim-survivors and the community safe, it can be done in a way that treats perpetrators as a whole-person.

Students bear the brunt of the impact when institutions fail to address sexual violence meaningfully. This often leaves students feeling like they cannot do anything except stand up and yell because people are being hurt and the institution is not doing anything about it. MacIsaac shared his perspective on how student leaders should focus on creating communities of care and support by focusing on the unmet needs of their peers, without interfering in a victim-survivor's choices about the person who harmed them.

Anti-Violence Project

The AVP is an initiative of the University of Victoria Student Society that provides anti-oppressive and sex-positive services, advocacy and action on and off campus to people of all genders in order to address and resist all intersecting forms of violence. One of the ways they embed person-centred care is the way they provide confidential emotional support and information to people seeking to navigate the broader service system. An initiative they lead is a Community Care Circle for students at the University of Victoria, which is a solidarity space for people to gather, share and learn from each other. This group provides a space for people to think about how we can make change on campus through student-led initiatives, as they believe the institution is more likely to listen to students in numbers. AVP also leads a Men's Circle which is open to any male students at the university to come together and talk about sexual violence, consent and related issues in an autonomous safe space. The AVP team delivers these services in ways that create meaningful connections and fosters transformational change by creating peer-led safe spaces.

Experiences and Findings:

United Kindgom



Overview

2 weeks

13 formal interviews with 13 people

3 meetings with 11 people

Discussions with people from 2 countries:

England

Scotland

1 conference



Key learnings

Universities in the UK are making progress in listening to students and meaningfully addressing sexual violence on campus. However, this is mostly the result of government commitments and sector-wide initiatives following pressure from grassroots activists and organisations. In particular, the Scottish Government has supported community organisations to deliver best practice prevention programs to universities. The intervention by the Scottish Government to create policy frameworks, funding and leadership groups to hold the university sector accountable for preventing sexual violence is a model for change that should be explored in the Australian context.

Throughout my research in the UK, there was a strong focus on collaborative, integrated approaches across the university system and with the broader community to keep students safe. The people I interviewed emphasised the importance of collaborative partnerships and stressed that this collaboration has led to better outcomes in tackling sexual violence. This included creating networks of practitioners across both the sexual violence sector and the university sector when addressing sexual violence across higher education. UK universities have employed gender-based violence experts to lead prevention efforts on campus, and student unions have employed activists and advocates to fill gaps in the formal institutional responses. In turn, this has created more evidence-informed and collaborative efforts with the student community to develop safer university communities.

Prevention initiatives that engage the whole university community are essential to combat rape culture and build a culture of consent. People I interviewed emphasised that these prevention initiatives must be inclusive of students, staff and faculty. UK universities implemented this by working with external organisations to deliver peer-led prevention activities, trauma-informed report and support options, including students on committees making decisions about sexual violence prevention on campus, and creating opportunities for community input into the development or revision of policies. This would often include working with student representatives and activists in the operation of policies, in acknowledgement that developing a policy is just the starting point for cultural change. Additionally, activists, practitioners and experts I interviewed talked about how decolonising universities is central to creating a culture where rape and violence doesn't thrive. This emphasis on the structural reform of institutions demonstrates that the focus must be on systemic prevention, rather than looking at interpersonal and individual actions. While there are limited efforts to decolonise universities in Australia, the progress that has been made in UK universities provides examples of progress and demonstrates that it is possible to change the culture across university campuses.

Across many of my interviews, there was a focus on the necessity of monitoring and evaluation of prevention programs, collecting evaluation data and creating reports of findings to publish publicly and/or present to university leaders. This evaluation and reporting was being undertaken by university staff and student unions, peak bodies, governments, researchers and student activists. Importantly, this reflects that while there may be work to demonstrate the prevalence of sexual violence (such as through the Change the Course report and NSSS in Australia), there is often limited monitoring or evaluation of initiatives that aim to prevent and reduce experiences of sexual violence.

Many UK activists have a focus on trust, relationships, community building, education and accountability to create safer university experiences. This includes centring support for victim-survivors within all initiatives and connecting with local sexual violence support services to link student victim-survivors with appropriate support. Sexual violence and student deaths are preventable, and Australia can learn so much from the work being done in the UK to not only save lives, but also to create a more connected workforce that implements prevention measures.

“Students learn far more from other students than members of staff. This peer model is instrumental to effective learning. It is less hierarchical and more community oriented.”



– **H Farley**, experienced leader having worked in various sexual violence prevention and support roles, including Training Facilitator at Not the Only One.

UK legal and policy context

In the UK, gender-based violence work is delegated to the four national governments – Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. However, there has been some work done by UK-wide entities, such as the National Union of Students and Universities UK.

In 2011, the National Union of Students report, *Hidden Marks*, was the first study of female students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault in the UK. Since then, Universities UK released the landmark *Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce Examining Violence against Women, Harassment and Hate Crime affecting University Students* (Changing the Culture report). This report made a series of recommendations for UK universities and opened funding for universities, community organisations and researchers to contribute towards preventing gender-based violence in higher education. The Change the Culture report, combined with the global conversations and activism as a result from the #MeToo movement, persuaded universities to resource teams dedicated to addressing sexual violence on campus. For example, the University of York's sexual violence response team increased from one to eight full-time staff in a few months.

England legal and policy context

In 2021, England's Office for Students published a *Statement of Expectations for Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Affecting Students in Higher Education* (Statement of Expectations). This Statement of Expectations provides a clear framework for colleges and universities in England to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual violence that affect their students. As an accountability mechanism, universities were invited by the Office for Students to review and update their systems, policies and processes during the 2021-22 academic year to align with these expectations. The Office for Students then contracted SUMS Consulting to do an evaluation of the initial impact of the Statement of Expectations in 2022. SUMS' *Final Report* concluded that while some progress has been made, it is highly variable across each institution, and recommended that regulatory intervention is required to drive sector-wide improvement. This demonstrates the shared problem across the UK and Australia that self-governance does not work, and that intervention is necessary.

Scotland legal and policy context

Compared to England, the Scottish Government has had a more comprehensive policy agenda that includes the university sector as part of its efforts to prevent gender-based violence across the country. In 2018, the Scottish Government released *Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence against Women and Girls* (Equally Safe), which focused on the necessity for key partners across all sectors to work collaboratively to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls.

To achieve this, the Scottish Government established the Delivering Equally Safe Fund to provide funding to projects supporting women and girls. In the 2021 funding round, the Scottish Government committed £38 million initially over two years to 121 projects focused on providing vital support to victim-survivors, and on essential work to tackle gender-based violence through preventative measures. Rape Crisis Scotland and EmilyTest were two organisations that received this funding to work with universities and colleges to prevent gender-based violence in higher education.

A key initiative funded by the Scottish Government was to adapt the Equally Safe strategy to the higher education sector. This was done in the form of two toolkits that could be used to prevent and address gender-based violence in higher education settings. The Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit and the Equally Safe in Higher Education Research Toolkit were both developed to provide a practical day-to-day strategic toolkit and a research-specific toolkit for wider reach across each university community. This project is referred to as the ESHE Toolkit. The ESHE Toolkit includes research tools, survey instruments, qualitative interviews and questionnaires to support the sector to collect gender-based violence data. The ESHE Toolkit is practice-based, evidence-based and was developed in partnership with gender-based violence organisations, such as rape crisis centres and women's rights organisations.

Since the launch of the ESHE Toolkit in 2018, the Scottish Funding Council supported its national rollout by requiring all universities implement it. They have required universities to provide information and data annually about their progress on its implementation. This includes providing equality outcome agreements whereby all institutions had to demonstrate how they are meeting the ESHE Toolkit requirements.

Another accountability mechanism the Scottish Government established to monitor progress was the Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities Core Leadership Group. This group decides on the strategic direction of tackling gender-based violence in universities.

Case study — EmilyTest

Linked to recommendations 1.4, 2.3, 4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 6.1 & 6.4

EmilyTest was set up in memory of Emily Drouet, an undergraduate law student, who was subjected to a campaign of gender-based violence by a fellow student and who took her own life in 2016. Fiona Drouet, Emily's mother, established EmilyTest with the mission to ensure no other student ended up in Emily's position. EmilyTest has created two key tools that promote systems reform and upskilling of staff to keep students safe in universities, with a particular focus on colleges.

1. Gender-Based Violence Charter

EmilyTest's Gender-Based Violence Charter is an award whereby educational institutions can sign up to undertake a process of reform, known as the 'Emily Test'. The process involves meeting minimum standards which could have saved Emily's life. It is made up of five principles with over 40 minimum standards in gender-based violence prevention, intervention and support. All of them must be met in order for the institution to pass the Emily Test. To enable institutions to implement this framework, EmilyTest supports institutions through one-to-one coaching, providing dedicated staff support, resources and opportunities to share best practice with the sector. Institutions then 'Take the Test' by presenting evidence of their work to an independent panel of experts.

This Charter is the first of its kind in the world. It was piloted across two colleges and two universities, and more than 13 institutions have signed up. The Charter is:

- Principles-led
- Testimony-based
- Whole-institution
- Collaborative
- Intersectional
- Victim-survivor and student centred.

The five principles of the Charter are:

1. Open and learning
2. Educated and empowered
3. Comprehensive and connected
4. Equal and inclusive
5. Safe and effective.

2. Gender-based violence risk assessment

EmilyTest developed a gender-based violence risk assessment tool for colleges and universities. The risk assessment tool, L.I.S.T.E.N, is a conversation guide for university and college staff to follow when supporting students who may have experienced gender-based violence.

EmilyTest provides training to institutions on how this framework can be utilised and relates the tool to Emily's story as an example of how this sort of response could have saved her life. This is essential because Emily went to staff at her college for help, but they did not intervene to keep her safe and she subsequently died as a result of the abuse she was enduring from a fellow student in the college. The intended learning outcomes from this training are for participants to be able to define gender-based violence, safely respond to a disclosure and to apply the steps of L.I.S.T.E.N.

The steps of L.I.S.T.E.N are:

- **L**isten – show your support.
- **I** Believe You – have no judgement.
- **S**cared – ask if they are afraid.
- **T**hreatened – assess threat level.
- **E**nding Life – ask about suicidal thoughts.
- **N**ext Steps – ensure they are not alone.

On top of these two key tools, EmilyTest hosts an annual conference to bring together the gender-based violence and university sectors – inclusive of decision-makers, frontline staff, university staff, student union representatives, student activists, and other groups to talk about how to address gender-based violence on UK campuses. This form of collaboration and collective building demonstrates their commitment to working together to generate better outcomes for everyone.

Gender-based violence in student populations is higher than the wider population. By sharing resources and engaging in multiple programs, we will increase the pace of change, not reinvent the wheel.



– **Fiona Drouet**, Founder, **Chastyn Webster**, Charter Development Manager, and **Kara Stewert**, Training Lead, of EmilyTest, UK.

The role of student unions

Student unions are important organisations within university structures. They act as the facilitator between staff and students to help students understand the university system. They are also institutions where lots of students who experience harm and violence go for help, but the unions responding often have limited training and resources to be able to provide that support. In some cases, they can also be places where bullying, harassment, violence and discrimination occurs. Student unions wield a lot of power and influence within the university system, which is why it is integral that they are working with and supporting student activists in their efforts to end sexual violence.

Case study — University of Stirling Students' Union

Linked to recommendations 2.5, 2.8, 3.7 & 6.1

Jess Reid, the 2022-23 Vice President (VP) Communities of the University of Stirling Students' Union, gave insight into how student unions should work with student activists to prevent sexual violence on campus. Reid knows how important it is for student union representatives to listen to activists at university, as she has been involved in student activism prior to being elected to her role. She spoke about how activism stems from a purely selfless act – activists are doing what they do because they know it will make it better for everyone.

When Reid and her peers noticed how prevalent gender-based violence was at their university, they created the group Reclaim Stirling. Reclaim Stirling is a group of students seeking to challenge the University of Stirling's sexual violence policy and create an open dialogue between university management, the students' union, societies and students to tackle the issue together. Reid brought together a volunteer team to develop and launch the Reclaim Stirling Report, which details survey responses by students on their experiences of sexual violence on campus and views on the university's efforts to address it.

In her role as VP Communities, Reid was able to implement recommendations as a direct result of her prior activism, including first responder training for student leaders on responding to disclosures of sexual violence. One of her goals was to implement mandatory training on consent and sexual violence for all students. This is important to Reid as she is passionate about setting a standard of respect and contributing to a culture that normalises consent.

I shared my experiences of trying to work alongside student unions in my role on The STOP Campaign, and how I struggled to get a response to an email, let alone a meeting or support for a campaign or initiative I was running. Reid's advice was to continue to be consistent in communications, ask union representatives questions in public forums about what they are doing, always record what is discussed in meetings, attend meetings with at least one other person, and attend their office during office hours to chat directly. These regular communications can help to hold appointed representatives in the student union accountable, especially given they are paid to help students and use their platform to influence and drive positive change.

Student unions must stand up for students, particularly student activists, and focus on building trust with the student body to make change. Student union representatives have greater power in the university system than regular students and can easily become overly involved in the politics of campus life. However, student unions have the power to lift up student activists and help them effect change in ways far beyond what those activists could achieve without their support – and Reid did this successfully in her time as VP Communities.

“Universities and student unions always say that students ‘don’t know how things work’, but we need to show them.”



– **Jess Reid**, 2022-23 Vice President for Communities at the University of Stirling Students' Union, Founder of the Sexual Health and Education Society, and Campaigner with Reclaim Stirling, at the University of Stirling, UK.

Case study — University of York Students' Union

Linked to recommendations 2.5 & 2.7

Hannah Nimmo, the Community and Wellbeing Officer of the University of York Students' Union, provided great insight into the important role of student unions to address sexual violence on campus. Nimmo's role is mostly to assist with student issues in the community, particularly those that impact on student wellbeing, such as sexual violence, sexual health and discrimination. Whether people get elected to the University of York Students' Union depends on their relationship with students. Nimmo ran on a platform of transparency, acknowledging that students often know conversations are happening in the student union, but don't necessarily know what is being discussed, which was something she promised to change.

An issue Nimmo has observed within her role is how the university administration always approaches the student union to get the 'student voice', rather than approaching students directly. Nimmo makes it clear that the university needs to actually talk to students. It is problematic when this is not done and change is often slower to come into effect. In my experience, this is very similar to how Australian universities engage with students. I have very rarely seen universities consult students directly on anything related to sexual violence. Usually, the only student consultation on a matter will consist of a university staff member speaking to the President or Women's Officer of the student union at their university. Rarely have I seen those officers organising for students to feed into this consultation, or even let them know what information they are telling the university 'on behalf of the student body'.

At the University of York, the student union has a good relationship with the university but must maintain engagement with students, especially residential halls as they risk becoming disconnected. An interesting structure they have was how their college-specific student committees report to the student union and the university administration. This regular contact creates more interconnected communications so that everyone knows what is happening and can work together more easily. On top of this, the union facilitates communication between colleges and ensures they collaborate on different activities. For example, one college had a sexual health and awareness week planned, so the student union actively helped to make it a university-wide week across all of the colleges. As student union representatives are paid, it made sense that they took on this coordination role compared to the unpaid student representatives in the colleges.

Examples of the core principles for effective prevention

I spoke with a number of victim-survivor advocates, activists, experts, researchers and practitioners who are national leaders in the prevention of sexual violence in university communities across the UK. A key theme that emerged across my conversations was how important it is for institution and government leaders to take a stance against sexual violence in tertiary education settings. This legitimacy and investment in experts, activists and community organisations to deliver best practice prevention education, resources and support is vital to broader cultural change. From my travels in the UK, five of the core principles were consistently embedded in the work of the people I spoke to. These were the need for prevention to be **comprehensive**, **trauma-informed**, **intersectional**, **anti-oppressive** and **feminist** for it to be effective.

Comprehensive

ProtectED

ProtectED is the first UK higher education accreditation scheme for student safety and security. The development of ProtectED is supported by the ProtectED Advisory Board – a group of public and private sector experts in standards development and issues of student safety, security and wellbeing. ProtectED was created when its Co-Founders, Brian Nuttall and Trevor Jones, identified that there are no compliance standards for universities' duty of care for student safety. Together, they started talking to people working in the student safety and security space to break down existing problems and formulate solutions. They wanted to break down silos of work across campuses, so they decided to bring important interrelated issues together to create a Code of Practice. ProtectED works across campus teams to encourage them to collaborate and share information to create a more comprehensively safe and secure campus environment.

The ProtectED Code of Practice covers five areas – the Core and four instruments.

- **Core Institutional Safety and Security**

This includes ensuring security teams receive adequate training on mental health, suicide prevention and responding to disclosures of sexual violence to support students. Signing up to ProtectED ensures that universities have plans in place when there are incidents, and that every security officer at the university has the relevant qualifications to perform their role.

- **Instrument 1: Student Wellbeing and Mental Health**

This instrument includes ensuring university staff have comprehensive mental health care training, connecting different teams on campus and joining up services to ensure it is a more comprehensive service.

ProtectED looks at how university services are used and accessed by students and checks if this is fit-for-purpose. They also look over what support the university provides to first responders (such as security) and friends/witnesses of incidents.

- **Instrument 2: International Students**

International students are a specific focus area across all parts of the safety and security of a campus because of their unique needs that universities often fail to meet. ProtectED especially looks to ensure services are easily identifiable by international students, including checking whether terms like 'wellbeing' and 'suicide' are used as these are not easily translatable to some languages that are dominant on UK campuses. They also focus on engaging the whole community to support international students by bringing people who speak languages other than English into support areas, and training staff in residential halls on how to identify changes in behaviour and flag that with the appropriate channels. ProtectED also requires the university to have systems in place to support international students, such as setting up technology, organising transport and providing education on domestic laws in the UK.

- **Instrument 3: Student Harassment and Sexual Assault**

ProtectED has a large focus on prevention and intervention from the beginning of a student's journey at a university. This includes going through what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with new students, providing information about their support and report options, and how to support peers if something happens and what procedures are in place for incidents like sexual violence and suicide attempts.

- **Instrument 4: Student Night Out**

Knowing what support must be in place for students on nights out is very important, especially for rural university communities where travelling to and from bars and clubs is more complex. For example, in rural universities, ProtectED ensure systems are set up for students to be able to get to and from town safely, such as having organised transport (like buses/coaches) to bring students back to campus or deals with taxi services so students can get home without paying at the time (and instead can pay later through the university to the taxi company). This also includes training staff within nightlife establishments about the role they can play to keep their patrons safe.

Universities who commit to the Code of Practice must abide by these five instruments to become and remain accredited with ProtectED. Universities who sign up must submit hundreds of documents and then have those documents processed and looked at by expert peer-reviewers. In doing this, they go through a process of building partnerships across campus and checking the function of services by doing focus groups with students of different year groups within the university to understand experiences on campus. This is important as they do not take the university's word at face value. Once a university has achieved accreditation, they have to renew every three years to ensure they are keeping up with emerging safety and security needs.

Trauma-informed

LimeCulture

LimeCulture is a national training and development organisation that works to improve responses to sexual violence. LimeCulture's work includes embedding Sexual Violence Liaison Officers (SVLOs) within universities to support end-to-end support for victim-survivors, leading trauma-informed training across the university sector and focusing on a whole-of-community approach to address sexual misconduct of staff and students.

LimeCulture designed the SVLO model to embed support within universities for people in cases of sexual misconduct. These SVLOs are staff members, mostly in a volunteer capacity, who are trained to support students who have experienced sexual violence. The SVLO model creates a dedicated, specialist provision within the university, providing end-to-end support and a single point of contact for victim-survivors to navigate the support and reporting systems. Staff are provided training to upskill SVLOs, who then act as the conduit to take students through internal and into external specialist services. The idea is that people in universities have access to those internal and external services with dedicated people who can help them get there. Developed in 2015 at two universities, the SVLO model is now active in more than 80 universities across the UK.

LimeCulture fills a gap in service provision by providing specific guidance and tools to implement high-level statements in government reports, like the ones produced by Universities UK, and walks alongside universities to support them to implement these policies and guidance material. For example, a common recommendation that comes out of reports for the university sector is to conduct trauma-informed sexual misconduct discipline proceedings. However, these reports don't always show universities how to do this in practice. LimeCulture fills that gap to support universities to do this through training, expert consultancy services and other support services. The LimeCulture team particularly focuses on educating university staff about how to create services that are genuinely trauma-informed and adopt the five guiding principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, choice, collaboration, trust and empowerment.

Intersectional

Not On My Campus UK

Not On My Campus (NOMC) UK is a student-led and alumni-led intersectional feminist collective working to tackle all forms of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in higher education. NOMC UK is comprised of passionate volunteers working in solidarity with and to support student leaders, activists and victim-survivors. They have formed trust with students and have reached across all four nations of the UK in doing so – a testament to their value in the space. They try to make things easier for activists on the ground by keeping connected with these groups and proactively reaching out to assist on campaigns and movements that students are leading.

NOMC UK has a unique role within the sexual violence activism realm in the UK, as it plays a supporting role to campus-specific groups by providing guidance. Johanna Kauppi and her team do this by providing an intersectional analysis and focusing on marginalised voices and experiences of sexual violence. In the UK, there is a lot of transphobia and white feminism, so NOMC UK upscale and provide guidance on how people can uplift their activism in more intersectional and anti-oppressive ways.

NOMC UK ensure their work is trauma-informed, survivor-led and focused on how institutional responses are affecting victim-survivors, rather than on perpetrators and punitive action, which is common in university sexual violence activism. A core part of this is educating students on how to be inclusive and accessible in their activism. This intersectional approach is necessary to bring about greater positive change and break down barriers to support for victim-survivors with diverse backgrounds. NOMC UK also brings groups together to do national campaigning in an effort to make these campaigns more sustainable, collaborative and inclusive.

Anti-oppressive

Mia Liyanage

Mia Liyanage is a decolonisation advocate and author of the 2020 Higher Education Policy Institute debate paper *Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities*. Liyanage has worked in equality, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism and decolonisation in higher education. Liyanage started this work as a student activist when she was studying at the University of Oxford, and is the former Co-Chair of *Common Ground Oxford* – a student movement challenging institutional racism and classism and campaigning for decolonisation.

A large portion of the anti-sexual violence activism movement is made up of white, straight, cisgender and educated women. This excludes people who don't fit into this mould of the '*perfect victim*' and those who hold '*pretty privilege*' in society. Pretty privilege is a problem across society where people who are considered to be physically attractive are treated differently. Liyanage reflected on her lived experience of not necessarily upholding western standards of beauty and how this shapes her experiences. This sort of western pretty privilege feeds into silencing many voices of people who have experienced sexual violence but feel that they won't be believed or taken seriously. Pretty privilege also plays out in the media coverage on the issue, as people who fit this western idea of beauty tend to gain more media interest and subsequent coverage.

Every university system is designed for its original student body – mostly being upper class, cisgender, straight white men. While there is increasing recognition of intersectional challenges flowing into awareness-raising and communication activities within the university system, there remains a lack of more radical policies that would more meaningfully change the culture for the better. Institutions cannot effectively combat sexual violence without dismantling harmful colonial structures that continue to exist.

These institutions are supposed to be places where people go to learn and grow, but instead many are faced with abuse, harassment, bullying and discrimination. Universities are meant to have a duty of care to the people who attend their campuses, but they fail in this regard. Liyanage is passionate about decolonising institutions because she believes that in their current forms they are not fit-for-purpose.

Decolonisation and anti-racism intersect with anti-violence work. We cannot address sexual violence without also addressing racism and colonial structures within the university system. Decolonising universities is central to creating a culture where rape and violence do not thrive.

Feminist

Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit

The development and implementation of the [ESHE Toolkit](#) is underpinned by feminist principles and theoretical frameworks. Its co-author, Dr Anni Donaldson spoke about how feminist activism is the reason that the Scottish Government has made commitments to ending gender-based violence. Everything Donaldson does is underpinned by a strong theoretical framework of feminist and trauma-informed approaches. As a feminist researcher, she focuses on bringing together activism, feminism and the research community. She believes that collaborative partnerships are vital and that they have shown time and time again to be successful in tackling gender-based violence. This includes through the coordination of community responses to violence against women in all settings, led by feminist services and women's rights organisations. Donaldson and her colleagues have made a tremendous positive impact on the gender-based violence landscape in Scotland through their work on this project and beyond.

“Money, power, status and influence are the core elements of the colonial society we live in. I was an 18-year-old doing the work my university never did.”



– **Mia Liyanage**, student activist when previously studying at the University of Oxford and former Co-Chair of Common Ground Oxford, UK.

Conclusion

Prevention through the lens of reducing sexual harm is not enough to change the pervasive rape culture at universities. Instead, adopting more relational and transformative approaches to preventing sexual violence is needed. These innovative prevention activities have largely emerged due to student activism calling for more care and accountability in university structures. As a result, institutions across the USA, Canada and the UK have worked in partnership with victim-survivors, students, activists and experts to improve institutional responses. While there is still a lot of work to be done in these contexts to further improve practices, these approaches are far ahead of where Australia is.

My journey across the USA, Canada and the UK confirmed that there are a wide range of impactful solutions to address campus sexual violence. The problem in Australia is the lack of prevention being delivered in ways that are **comprehensive, collaborative, trauma-informed, intersectional, anti-oppressive, feminist** and **person-centred**.

To increase the pace of change in preventing sexual violence at Australian universities, this requires:

1. **Comprehensive** prevention that takes a whole-of-institution approach to combat rape culture by breaking down silos across the community.
2. **Collaborative** prevention that focuses on meaningful partnerships with students, activists, advocates and victim-survivors, and includes them in solutions.
3. **Trauma-informed** prevention that believes victim-survivors and puts their needs first.
4. **Intersectional** prevention that acknowledges the ways in which people experience oppression and discrimination differently, and seeks to minimise these barriers to support.
5. **Anti-oppressive** prevention that provides care in ways that challenge colonial norms within institutions and change systems.
6. **Feminist** prevention that promotes the rights of everyone and prioritises collective action to address injustice.
7. **Person-centred** prevention that fosters human connections between people and treats individuals in their whole-person.

These core principles inform how prevention can be done effectively. With these principles embedded, the recommendations in this report provide tangible actions for institutions, governments and activists. They are a way forward for change in Australia.

My most valuable experience of this project was the privilege to meet and learn from so many activists and advocates about how they make change in their local communities. The whole experience reaffirmed that activists are the ones changing attitudes, behaviours, policies, procedures and ultimately sociocultural change. They are the ones instilling confidence and courage for collective action to build social change movements – to prevent sexual violence, support victim-survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.

“

You're never safe when you do this work. You always have a target on your back. Find the people who are not threatened by you and make noise with them.

”



– **Alicia Oeser**, Director of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) at the University of British Columbia, Canada.

Dissemination and implementation

Dissemination and implementation to date

To date, I have shared my Churchill fellowship research findings in domestic and international forums. Specifically, I gave presentations at:

- Association for Tertiary Education Management's 2022 Australasian Universities Safer Communities Symposium, which brought together people working in the university sector in Australia and New Zealand.
- Not On My Campus UK Convention 2023, which brought together students, activists, frontline service providers, experts and other advocacy organisations in the UK and internationally.

I have also already utilised my learnings, connections and experiences to foster change through my work with The STOP Campaign. I have done this in my leadership role of leading STOP's initiatives – including how we create community and also how we design, implement and review our initiatives.

#IDeserveSafety Campaign

I have utilised my learnings in my role leading The STOP Campaign's #IDeserveSafety Campaign.

The #IDeserveSafety Campaign was launched on 2 August 2023, with support from EROC Australia, Fair Agenda and the National Union of Students. The STOP Campaign was invited to launch the Campaign at Parliament House by Senator David Pocock, and we were also joined by Senator Larissa Waters, Zoe Daniel MP, Allegra Spender MP, Monique Ryan MP and Sophie Scamps MP. Since this time, I have met with:

- Current Federal Education Minister the Hon Jason Clare MP
- Senior Department Officials of the Department of Education
- Zali Steggall MP
- Zoe Daniel MP
- Senator Larissa Waters
- Senator Mehreen Faruqi
- Allegra Spender MP
- Cate Chaney MP.

In the second half of 2023, since launching the #IDeserveSafety campaign, I have been a part of a Stakeholder Reference Group on Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education – led by the Commonwealth Department of Education. As part of this, Patty Kinnersly, the CEO of Our Watch, was appointed as an expert to lead this Group. With this Group – which included activists, experts, student advocates, university officials, student accommodation officials and student support organisations – we have worked together to develop an Action Plan addressing gender-based violence in higher education (Action Plan).

I attended a Meeting of all Education Ministers across the country to give a speech as to why they should endorse this Action Plan, alongside Sharna Bremner (EROC Australia), Renee Carr (Fair Agenda), Dr Allison Henry and Patty Kinnersly. I spoke about how this Action Plan aligns with my Churchill Fellowship research and the necessity for governments to intervene in order for sexual violence to be reduced across Australian universities. As a result, Ministers agreed to release the Action Plan for consultation.

I will be continuing to play a role in the consultation of this Action Plan, its implementation and other government initiatives to address sexual violence in higher education.

Plans for dissemination and implementation

I plan to disseminate my findings by focusing on engaging with key stakeholders, organisations and governments to influence action. I will try to work with universities where appropriate and where universities indicate genuine desire to improve their practices. However, I will focus my efforts on governments, advocates, activists (and their organisations) as influencers of change to the university sector. I will use this research to directly influence politicians and decision-makers across all levels of government, as well as to influence researchers, activists, advocates and gender-based violence organisations that are already advocating to governments for reforms on similar issues. I will also continue to share my learnings at international, national and local opportunities, such as at conferences and events. My aim is to focus on government, non-government and university sectors for these opportunities.

I aim to use my networks to reach beyond Australia and to make connections locally and overseas – to build a collective community of care.

Launch of my report

I will be hosting an online community launch event of this report to bring people from across Australia and internationally to learn about my research, its key findings and examples of good practice. This launch will then be recorded and shared as a way to share a breakdown of my research and how people can utilise it to influence change in their own communities.

Online presence

I will be disseminating my experiences and learnings by establishing an online presence. This is with the aim to reach a wider range of people, share information and educate others on my research, and to influence individual and systemic reforms.

Ways I will be doing this is by:

- Sharing regular blogs on my website of the interviews I conducted.
- Posting regularly as my blogs are shared on my various social media platforms, focusing on LinkedIn and Instagram.
- Seeking opportunities to speak about my research (such as podcasts, interviews, instagram live feeds, at events, to media or written Q&As).

Advocacy

As I step away from leading The STOP Campaign – which is mostly leading local prevention programs, education workshops and collective action initiatives – I plan to step into advocacy as an individual. My intention is to share my research and lobby governments and institutions for reform, seek out consultancy and advisory opportunities, and influence at the national level. As I move with the movement, my goal is to move from being a part of grassroots activism to more systemic advocacy. This is how I am committing to my values that STOP's activism continues to be student-led.

“

Good activists move with the movement.

– Omny Miranda Martone, Founder of SVPA, USA

Risks to implementation and mitigation strategies

Risk: Lack of institutional buy-in

The main risk to implementation of my recommendations is resistance and backlash from the university sector. My experience with senior university leaders and student union executives at Australian universities has seen them refuse to acknowledge the problem, be reluctant to engage in prevention work leading to meaningful change, and an overall lack of collaboration between relevant stakeholders. In some cases, I have met with senior leaders and student union executives at certain universities where they have told me directly that programs and resources that The STOP Campaign delivers are not needed because *'rape doesn't happen on our campus'*. So, while some universities in Australia may be progressing positive changes to address sexual violence on campus, there are many that are still failing to acknowledge that it is happening at all.

Mitigation strategy:

My mitigation strategy is to not limit my efforts to only working with university institutions to implement my recommendations. I will work with institutions that demonstrate a genuine interest in improving their institutional responses to sexual violence and collaboration with student activists. However, I won't be seeking to push my agenda into universities that are not willing to change. Instead, I will focus my efforts on engaging with decision-makers and service providers, such as governments overseeing policy and funding, and community organisations/activist groups delivering prevention activities.

Risk: Lack of government investment

There is a risk that governments may not be willing to invest in funding to address sexual violence in universities. While governments have recently committed to intervening to regulate on this issue, they may not be as willing to provide funding opportunities to support important prevention work. My recommendations call for the investment of governments to provide funding support to community sector organisations, grassroots activists and university sexual violence offices, to develop and deliver prevention programming. To date, there has been a lack of funding opportunities in sums that would make a significant difference.

Another risk surrounding lack of government investment is the way in which funding is administered in Australia. The Australian Government rarely releases similar funding opportunities to open tender, and instead relies on private sector entities such as large consulting firms or research bodies within universities that are on existing tender panels.

Funding administered in this way does not reach local community groups doing best practice prevention with their peers. Noting a lack of previous willingness to open larger grant opportunities in this way, there is a risk that government investment may continue to be centralised to private entities and as such prevention initiatives may not meet the core principles for effective prevention.

Mitigation strategy:

My mitigation strategy is to engage with government entities responsible for aligned strategies from whom gender-based violence work is funded out of. For the Australian Government, this would be through the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-32, led by the Department of Social Services, and the Action Plan to address Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education, led by the Department of Education. Having presented to all Australian Education Ministers recently, I will continue to engage on a state-based level with the Tertiary Education and Women's/Gendered-Violence portfolios. Alongside these engagement strategies with governments to advise on how funding should be invested in effective sexual violence prevention, I also aim to continue to influence through existing networks across the community sector that are delivering prevention efforts in universities.

Risk: Lack of resourcing for activists and advocates

There is a risk that the lack of resources available to activists and advocates will affect their ability to meaningfully adopt the core principles and recommendations in this report. As activists and advocates almost always do their work voluntarily, there are high levels of turnover and a lack of sustainability and momentum in this space.

Mitigation strategy:

My mitigation strategy is to be available to activists and advocates to help them implement my report where possible, and to provide advice and training where this is requested. I also aim to connect solitary activists and advocates with each other so they can build supportive networks and potentially generate collective action.

“

I was very involved in campus activism during university. It's not what I wanted to do originally but it needed to be done. I was so burnt out, angry and frustrated, but I also kept going so that future students aren't the ones having to fight for a safe learning environment.

”



– Holly Foxall, Founder and Program Director, and Emma Kuzmyk, Program Coordinator, of Action Now Atlantic, Canada.

List of acronyms

Change the Course report	Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities, released in 2017 by the Australian Human Rights Commission
LGBTIQA+	LGBTIQA+ is an evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual
NSSS	The National Student Safety Survey: Report on the Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault among University Students in 2021, released in 2022 by Universities Australia
RA	Resident Advisor, a student leadership position generally responsible for pastoral care of peers at their student accommodation
UA	Universities Australia, the peak body for universities in Australia

Glossary of terms

Activism	Activism involves taking deliberate action on behalf of a cause to challenge societal norms and systems in order to effect social change. This includes actions like organising or attending protests, meeting with leaders to push for policy or legal change on a particular issue or circulating petitions for signature.
Advocacy	Advocacy involves using one's voice, skills and networks to elevate the voices of others and encourage positive change from within systems and institutions. This includes encouraging open discussions about important issues with community members, contacting local politicians or community leaders to push for policy change, or participating in social media movements to raise awareness of a particular issue.
Anti-oppression	Anti-oppression work seeks to recognise and challenge oppression in society and mitigate its effects. It is aimed at dismantling oppressive structures and practices through a social work lens.
Colonisation	Colonisation is when there is control by one power over a dependent area or people. In the context of Australia as a colonised country, British colonial power structures continue to exist within society and institutions, including structures that privilege white settlers, especially men, and oppress Indigenous peoples and other marginalised communities.
Communities of care	Communities of care is a practice model that centres care and peer support when addressing a community issue. It involves establishing a coalition to increase community self-determination and achieve social change. It is a community-wide approach that combines public health and social work approaches to bring people together to lead change at the grassroots level.
Decolonisation	Decolonisation involves alleviating colonial power structures and belief systems in institutions (which favour Western and privileged ways of doing, thinking and being).

Feminism	Feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities. In the context of sexual violence, feminism is underpinned by a gendered analysis of violence and harm which recognises the disproportionate rates of sexual violence that women, trans and non-binary people experience.
Grassroots activism	Grassroots activism describes activism that occurs within local communities to create change at the local, regional and/or international level.
Institutional betrayal	Institutional betrayal is the harm that an institution inflicts on people who depend upon it. Individuals who expect and trust an institution to keep them safe may feel betrayed if the institution instead fails to prevent violence, creates difficult or unsafe processes for reporting, supports cover-ups, endorses misinformation or punishes victim-survivors who disclose their experiences.
Institutional courage	Institutional courage is the opposite of institutional betrayal. Institutional courage includes institutional accountability, transparency, making reparations where needed and a commitment to being responsive to its members. Institutional courage means acting in these ways despite unpleasantness, risk and short-term costs.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality is the understanding that different forms of inequality and discrimination (such as discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, sex, sexuality, age, religion, socio-economic status and/or physical and mental ability) combine, overlap and intersect to shape and influence an individual's experiences.
Intersectional feminism	Intersectional feminism recognises how different aspects of a person's gender and identity interact to influence the way they experience the world (especially patriarchy, misogyny and sexism) and the barriers they might face as a result. It recognises that some victim-survivors of sexual violence find it much harder to achieve justice and support because of these intersecting forms of discrimination. An intersectional feminist approach to preventing gender-based violence seeks to address other forms of discrimination and oppression as well.

Misogyny	Misogyny is the socially ingrained and structural process through which men assert power and control, often through violent means, over others (predominantly women). Although misogyny is commonly understood as a contempt for women, misogyny is deeply connected to other social norms and ideas about gender roles, power and control.
Patriarchy	Patriarchy describes the structure of society that allows men – especially white, cisgender and heterosexual men – to exercise power over all other gender identities. Traditionally, patriarchy was thought of as referring to the power relationship between the gender binary, particularly between white men and women. An intersectional understanding of patriarchy includes people outside of this binary.
Person-centred	A person-centred approach is a way of thinking and doing things that places an individual at the centre of the service and treats them as a person first. It focuses on the whole person rather than labelling them based on a specific behaviour, action or attribute.
Primary prevention	Primary prevention involves identifying and addressing long-term risk factors of sexual violence, including preventing people from becoming perpetrators by changing values, attitudes and social norms that reinforce rape culture.
Privilege	Privilege is any benefit, opportunity or advantage given to someone merely because of their identity. In Australia, structures of privilege often favour white, cisgender and heterosexual people. Experiencing privilege does not mean that you will not face challenges – it means that those challenges are not made harder to overcome because of things that are out of your control.
Public health	A public health approach to sexual violence takes a comprehensive view of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. This is done by detecting, preventing and responding to sexual violence through three tiers of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Restorative justice	Restorative justice is an approach to justice that is aimed at repairing or restoring harm for a person, and accountability for the person who caused this harm. Restorative justice focuses on the connection and relationships between people. It is a person-centred approach to understanding and responding to the needs of affected individuals and communities.
Secondary prevention	Secondary prevention involves identifying and addressing short-term and immediate threats of sexual violence, including preventing perpetrators from taking action by challenging their beliefs, controlling the environment and intervening before they act.
Sexual assault	Sexual assault is any act of a sexual nature carried out against a person without that person's consent through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion (such as threats and blackmail). This includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault, assault with a weapon, indecent assault, penetration by objects, forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration and attempts to force a person into sexual activity.
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for a sexual favour or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature (including making sexual statements or jokes) in circumstances which could reasonably make the person who is being harassed feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. This includes engaging in any unwelcome behaviour that is demeaning because of a person's sex. Sexual harassment can be a single event or a pattern of behaviours which may be overt or subtle.
Sexual violence	Sexual violence includes any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or unwanted sexual comments or advances directed against a person using coercion or force, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim-survivor, in any setting. This is an umbrella term for sexual assault and sexual harassment.
Tertiary prevention	Tertiary prevention involves identifying and addressing the continuation of sexual violence and further harm, including by preventing repeat perpetration and/or continued perpetration.

Transformative justice	Transformative justice is an approach to justice that seeks to transform the relationships, societal and institutional structures that allowed violence to occur. Transformative justice recognises the intersections of people's identities and experiences that may contribute to their choice to cause harm to another person.
Trauma	Trauma is a negative emotional response to an event or experience, such as sexual violence. Every person reacts differently to trauma and there is no 'right' or 'best' way to respond. The healing process from a traumatic experience differs from person to person and has no set time frame.
Trauma-informed	Trauma-informed means that someone understands trauma and seeks to do no harm in their engagement with others. The guiding principles of being trauma-informed are safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

***We can accept the wins
but never stop, because
the violence doesn't.***



– **Emma Kuzmyk**, Program Coordinator of Action Now Atlantic and Co-Founder of Writing Activism and St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) Peer Support Program, **Sophie Landry**, Education Coordinator of Action Now Atlantic, **Heather Blackburn**, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate at StFX, **Addy Strickland**, Co-Founder of Writing Activism and the StFX Peer Support Program, **Alyssa Spridgeon**, Visible@X Coordinator at StFX, and **Holly Foxall**, Founder and Program Director of Action Now Atlantic, Canada.

