Groundbreaking national student survey on sexual assault and harassment launched today

Australia’s first comprehensive national prevalence survey on university student experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment will be launched today.

The ground-breaking Respect. Now. Always. national university student survey on sexual assault and harassment is a key part of an initiative by Australian universities to prevent and address sexual assault and harassment.

Universities Australia has asked the Australian Human Rights Commission to conduct the survey, and is working closely with the Commission to implement it.

The survey will provide universities with data to help improve their policies, procedures and support services.

“Our universities want to make it absolutely clear that we have a zero tolerance policy on sexual assault and sexual harassment,” said Universities Australia Chair Professor Barney Glover.

“This survey will give us an even clearer picture of further work we need to do. University leaders are committed to improving our responses and the support we provide to students who have experienced sexual assault and harassment,” said Professor Glover.

The survey is supported by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the National Tertiary and Education Union (NTEU).

NUS Women’s Officer Heidi La Paglia said these issues were clearly of concern to university students.

“It’s great to see universities, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and university students and staff coming together to make university campuses safer,” she said.

“The NTEU has long been an advocate around raising awareness for effective university policies and processes. Universities, staff and university leaders, will have far greater reach in ensuring all students and staff feel safe on our campuses,” said NTEU National President Jeannie Rea.

The Respect. Now. Always. university student survey has two elements. The first is a national prevalence survey to provide robust quantitative data on the scale and nature of university student experiences of sexual assault and harassment.

Secondly, any university student who wishes to share their experiences can do so confidentially via the Australian Human Rights Commission website from today. These additional online submissions will provide qualitative data to inform further improvements in university policies and support services.

All student responses will be de-identified, so that confidentiality and privacy are protected.

Universities Australia has committed almost $1 million to support the survey as part of the Respect. Now. Always. campaign.

The prevalence survey will run at different times at each university to accommodate semester schedules, with the first survey to begin in mid-September.

The survey results will be analysed and the findings reported by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The survey has been developed with input from experts including the Australian Human Rights Centre at UNSW, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Roy Morgan Research, and the Australian Human Rights Commission. Seed funding for the survey project was provided by The Hunting Ground Australia Project.
The publicly available, de-identified data from the survey will inform the Australian Human Rights Centre's research project Strengthening Australian university responses to sexual assault and harassment.

About Respect Now. Always.

In February 2016, Australia’s 39 universities came together with former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick to launch the Respect Now. Always campaign.

The campaign has three key elements: raising awareness of sexual assault and sexual harassment for students; obtaining prevalence data to guide further improvements in policies and services; and a practice across the sector.

Spokespeople from Universities Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and Our Watch are available for comment.

Note to media and communications teams:

When publishing materials about the survey, please include contact numbers for support services.

If you need help, or to talk with someone, specialist support is available by calling the National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).

#respectnowalways

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