

## Sexual violence in Australian universities under the spotlight.

**One in six university students in Australia have been sexually harassed since they started university, and one in 20 have been sexually assaulted.**

These are the disturbing headline statistics from the *Universities Australia Report on the Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Among University Students in 2021* prepared by the Social Research Centre, released today.

Full Stop Australia Chief Executive Officer, Hayley Foster, welcomed the report, commending Australian universities for their transparency in highlighting the prevalence and impact of sexual violence, but noted that more needs to be done to put a full stop to sexual violence in universities.

"Transparency is critical. We can't address sexual violence if it's swept under the carpet," Ms Foster said.

"This report shows that we still have unacceptable rates of sexual violence being perpetrated against university students - particularly younger female students, transgender and non-binary students, and students with disability; and this is even more pronounced for residential students."

"We know that sexual violence and sexual harassment has serious impacts on one's life and wellbeing, and for university students it can seriously impact their ability to complete their education. The consequences can be lifelong and devastating."

"Whilst some positive measures have been taken to educate university staff and students on how best to prevent and respond to sexual violence, this report shows that half of students know nothing or very little about where to report sexual violence, nor where they can access support."

The compendium report, the *Qualitative Research on Experiences of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Among University Students in 2021*, includes a number of recommendations from students themselves as to how to create a safer, more respectful culture at university, free from violence and harassment.

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We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.

Ms Foster said this is where we need to start.

“At the heart of the recommendations from students themselves is the suggestion that universities take greater responsibility for setting a culture of safety and respect so as remove the burden from sexual violence survivors who often feel responsible for changing it for everyone else,” said Ms Foster.

“There needs to be a commitment to changing university policies and practices, ensuring mandatory training and orientation programs for all staff and students as well as creating strong reporting mechanisms and appropriate responses to substantiated allegations.”

“It’s also essential that survivors have access to the specialist supports they need to not only deal with the immediate trauma, but also to recover from that trauma in order to succeed at university and beyond.”

“Full Stop Australia stands ready to support these changes, both through providing trauma specialist support to sexual violence survivors, and through assisting universities to create safer, more respectful learning environments.”

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**Call 1800 FULL STOP (1800 385 578) or online at [www.fullstop.org.au](http://www.fullstop.org.au) to access our trauma-specialist counsellors who are available 24/7.**

**Full Stop Australia is national organisation committed to putting a full stop to sexual, domestic and family violence through support, training, and advocacy. Find out more here: [www.fullstop.org.au](http://www.fullstop.org.au)**