

THE HUNTING GROUND AUSTRALIA PROJECT

On Safe Ground: a roadmap to tackle sexual violence at Australian universities

The Hunting Ground Australia Project has today welcomed the release of the landmark research report, *On Safe Ground: A Good Practice Guide for Australian Universities*, by the Australian Human Rights Centre (AHRCentre) at UNSW.

“On Safe Ground demonstrates just how far Australia is lagging behind other countries in its response to issues surrounding sexual assault and harassment in our universities. As the report notes, Australia has no explicit national legislative framework and Australian universities have comparatively weak arrangements to manage, redress and prevent university sexual violence,” said The Hunting Ground Australia Project Campaign Director Allison Henry.

On Safe Ground draws on international comparative research and the findings of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s national student survey, released on Tuesday, in developing a framework for use by Australian universities to develop and enhance policies and procedures for the prevention of sexual assault and harassment.

The report includes 18 recommendations, directed at Federal and State / Territory Governments, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Universities Australia, individual universities and residential colleges. The recommendations cover systemic issues, institutional responses, student support and prevention strategies and provide a holistic response to tackling sexual violence at Australian universities.

The Hunting Ground Australia Project hopes that universities and residential colleges will promptly consider the recommendations and review and reform their systems to ensure the safety of their students.

“For too long there has been a culture of denial amongst Australian universities. With the two reports released this week universities and residential colleges need to front up to the reality. On Safe Ground provides a roadmap for what they need to do next,” said Ms Henry.

The Hunting Ground Australia Project today called on the Australian and State and Territory Governments to step up their efforts to tackle sexual violence in Australian universities.

“Australian universities receive substantial financial support – around \$14 billion in 2013-14 – from the broader Australian community and we expect that the Australian Government ensures that every possible step is taken to ensure the safety of all students at our universities,” said Ms Henry.

“We are particularly looking to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) – established in 2011 to regulate and assure the quality of Australian tertiary education institutions – to closely consider how their Threshold Standards, which came into effect on 1 January 2017, can be applied to university responses to managing and preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault.”

The Hunting Ground Australia Project is also calling on State and Territory governments to review the legislative arrangements regulating universities and many residential colleges. “It is essential that residential colleges are brought within the ambit of university policies and procedures responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment.”

On Safe Ground: A Good Practice Guide for Australian Universities, the Australian Human Rights Centre at UNSW’s report, is available at:
http://www.ahrcentre.org/sites/ahrcentre.org/files/AHR0002%20On%20Safe%20Ground_Good%20Practice%20Guide_online.pdf

Further information about The Hunting Ground Australia Project is available in the July 2017 Project Update:
http://www.thehuntinggroundaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Progress_Report_The_Hunting_Ground_Australia_Project_July2017_e.pdf

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About The Hunting Ground Australia Project

The Hunting Ground Australia Project has for the past two years used the critically acclaimed 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground* as a tool to engage Australian universities, and the broader community, in a conversation around issues concerning sexual assault and harassment, consent, disclosure and reporting in Australian universities.

The Hunting Ground Australia Project has played a critical role in:

- facilitating a national campus screening program of *The Hunting Ground*,
- instigating the Australian Human Rights Commission's national student survey,
- supporting the Australian Human Rights Centre at UNSW's development of effective and appropriate institutional responses to sexual assault and harassment in Australian universities,
- commissioning the Full Stop Foundation to adapt existing ethics and consent training programs to the Australian university context and
- partnering with Fair Agenda to support the first ever record of the quantity and quality of sexual violence prevention training provided by university residential colleges.

The Hunting Ground Australia Project originated through the Good Pitch Australia model, which galvanised philanthropic support and a broad coalition of partners to work together on a comprehensive campaign to tackle sexual violence within university communities. Partners include the National Union of Students, Australian Human Rights Centre, Australian Human Rights Commission, Full Stop Foundation, Madman Entertainment, End Rape on Campus Australia, Fair Agenda and Universities Australia.

In April 2017, The Hunting Ground Australia Project was recognised by Philanthropy Australia's Gender-wise Award, presented to The Caledonia Foundation and Good Pitch Australia for The Hunting Ground Australia Project.

Further information about The Hunting Ground Australia Project is available in the July 2017 Project Update:

http://www.thehuntinggroundaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Progress_Report_The_Hunting_Ground_Australia_Project_July2017_e.pdf