

Media release

GSA condemns transphobic website from university academic

Content warning: transphobia, sexual assault, harassment and violence.

GSA condemns the publication of a transphobic website by a senior lecturer at the University of Melbourne, and unequivocally affirms the right of all trans and gender diverse students to be included, valued and feel safe in all dealings with the University community.

Whatever the intentions of the website, and although GSA supports the right to free speech, we fear that websites such as this one may result in harm for the trans community as the “stories” that have been published can be misinterpreted and misused by others with a transphobic agenda. Much of the content on the site incorrectly depicts trans women as a threat to cisgender women, or undeserving of existing in women’s spaces. This is despite trans and gender diverse Victorians being at a higher risk of sexual assault, harassment and other forms of violence themselves, including trans women, with violence against trans women of colour even more prevalent.

GSA President Jeremy Waite calls on the university to honour its commitments to diversity and inclusion, saying that: “while we support academic freedom and free speech, permitting rhetoric that is exclusionary towards trans students is antithetical to these principles. The University is failing in its obligation to adequately protect trans students within the community from this kind of bigotry.”

GSA endorses the open letter from university staff calling on the University to cease promotion of transphobic academic content, and condemns the university’s refusal to take action to protect trans and gender diverse members of the university community.

GSA Women’s Officer Dr Catherine Allingham (currently works extensively on initiatives to reduce gender-based violence through University Respect and Gender Equity initiatives), was saddened to read of the website: “I ask the University to consider the safety of all its community members when responding to potential harm arising from this website. I am reminded of a recent encounter with a member of the trans-community when I asked where she felt safe, to which her reply was “there are very few safe spaces. I spend my days trying to survive in brave spaces”. As a student I want to be part of a University that acknowledges the innate worth and equal value of all individuals.”

GSA LGBTQI+ Officer Isadora Reynolds also expresses concern for the safety of trans students and the collection of data on the site, and states that: “Victims of harassment are entitled to a space where they can voice their concerns, but this shouldn’t lead to the disparagement of other vulnerable communities. Every victim should be heard, should feel safe, deserves dignity.”

GSA will always fight for a university community that champions respect, inclusion and diversity, enabling all community members to learn, work and contribute in safety.

About the Graduate Student Association

The University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the peak representative body for all graduate students at the University of Melbourne. We are an independent association led by an elected student council, providing representation, events, training and support.

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