

Media release – GSA supports the creation of the new Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy

Statement from the GSA Women's Officer

Content warning: mention of sexual assault and harassment with no explicit description.

GSA welcomes the recent finalisation and implementation of the University's new Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy. The creation of a standalone policy is a key step forward in the University's commitment to fostering a safe campus and University environment. This step is underpinned by the University's ongoing commitment to the recommendations made by the Australian Human Rights Commission as a result of the *Change the Course* report.

GSA Women's Officer Madeleine Charisis added "GSA has continuously and strenuously advocated for the needs of graduate students throughout the development of the policy. We welcome the explicit inclusion of graduate researcher-supervisor relationships, and off-site learning environments such as placements and internships, in the scope of the policy, which GSA campaigned for throughout the consultation process".

GSA will continue to advocate for the authentic inclusion of student voice and input in review processes, as part of the ongoing review of the policy into the future. While student ownership of the policy was not necessarily at the forefront of the policy's creation, the University has a significant opportunity to engage with the student body as the policy is implemented and reflected upon, to ensure it accurately meets the needs of our diverse student body. This may include future improvements in the accessibility of the policy and accompanying resources to support a range of student identities, sexualities and genders, cultural and language backgrounds, and disabilities. GSA will welcome all opportunities to actively support the creation and implementation of educational resources, online materials and policy amendments in the future to ensure student voice is authentically embedded in the policies and procedures which are designed to serve the needs of students and staff.

GSA President Jeremy Waite in support of this policy has stated – "Now more than ever, issues of sexual assault and harassment need to be prioritised by educational institutions in order to minimise incidences of harm and move towards a stronger culture of prevention". As the next report is released in 2022 outlining student experiences and recommendations from the National Student Safety Survey, the University of Melbourne will need to clearly and transparently commit to ongoing improvements to culture, training, management and policy in order to protect the safety and wellbeing of the University community. GSA looks forward to advocating for the needs of current and future students and engaging with the University to uphold an educational environment free from discrimination, harassment, and assault.

Social Media

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