



20th January

For immediate release

James Cook University promotes convicted rapist to adviser position

Safety on University campuses is being compromised by University officials not taking seriously the epidemic of gendered violence, sexual assault, and rape.

The National Union of Students is appalled by the actions of James Cook University allowing staff member, Douglas Steele to continue working for JCU after pleading guilty and being convicted of raping an indigenous student. Afterwards, Steele was promoted and made academic advisor to indigenous students on campus.

Despite the Universities Australia campaign 'Respect.Now.Always' preaching to end gendered violence on campus, this issue continues to plague University campuses across Australia. JCU is signed on to the RNA campaign proving how little accountability Universities have to uphold student safety or to put in place the processes and procedures necessary to end this culture on campus.

"We've been fighting gendered violence on campus for decades," said NUS President, Sophie Johnston "Despite the Respect.Now.Always campaign, Universities are still refusing to take responsibility for this culture, and the solutions for change."

"The National Union of Students is calling for Universities across Australia to commit to best practice responses to tackle this culture," Johnston said, "Until they provide adequate prevention strategies, reporting systems, and support programs, Universities are refusing to make a commitment to student safety on campus."

The National Union of Students Women's Department will launch its campaign to end bias against women in higher education on February 6 to be rolled out during O-weeks on campuses across Australia. The campaign will include a strong move to end gendered violence on campus.

"The promotion of Mr Steele following his conviction demonstrates the utter disregard James Cook University has towards the welfare of women students" said NUS Women's Officer, Abby Stapleton "This irresponsible move is indicative of a culture that allows for the normalisation of rape and assault on our university campuses. JCU preaches a zero tolerance for violence against women, but will promote a convicted rapist and place marginalised students in his care."

The NUS Womens department will be marching at the womens rallies being held in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra on the 21st of January. The march is being held in solidarity with our American allies who are protesting against the Trump administration and the hateful bigoted policies he promotes.

For further comment;

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