

New O'Week revelations more proof that Minister needs to intervene to stop campus sexual violence

PRESS RELEASE

Revelations in tonight's 60 Minutes that horrifying hazing activities and traditions have continued in this year's O'Weeks affirm the need for the Government to intervene for student safety, leading advocates say.

"Universities and residences are trying to pretend otherwise, but this is still a huge issue. Just last month I was in Newcastle watching students write sexist slurs on each other's shirts and making fun of hazing and their university's online consent training." Kate Crossin, Women's Officer at National Union of Students says.

"Already this year we've heard from dozens of students at universities and residences who've contacted us about appalling treatment in O'Weeks. A number have actually moved out of their residences after just a few days because of the hazing, sexism and intimidation they've experienced. This problem is so bad that they're doing that even though it could cost them thousands of dollars in forfeited fees." Says Sharna Bremner, Director of End Rape on Campus Australia.

"We've heard from multiple students who've been encouraged to drink until they vomit, who've had abuse screamed at them by senior students, who've been subjected to sexist chants and songs. All this is still happening this year, despite universities' protesting that things have changed." Ms Bremner added.

"The only way we can expect to prevent rape on campus is if universities and residences are actually held to account. The Education Minister needs to intervene, and ensure there's an independent expert-led body resourced to guarantee real improvements for student safety." Says Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

"Universities and residences have a reputational – and therefore financial – interest in these kinds of stories not being made public." Added Ms Carr.

"Leaving universities and residences in charge of ending campus sexual assault is like putting the fox in charge of the hen house." Added Sharna Bremner from End Rape on Campus Australia. "Again and again, when students have needed them, they've proven they're willing to put their own reputation and financial interests above those of their students."

"Universities have been pretending that they've driven the push to uncover these issues, but that couldn't be further from the truth. They only acted on the eve of *The Hunting Ground* being screened at universities around Australia. And the only reason we're finally talking about the violence being perpetrated against students on campus is because students and survivors have bravely and

consistently spoken out and made it impossible for universities to continue to ignore this issue.” Added Allison Henry, Campaign Director for The Hunting Ground Australia Project.

Available for comment:

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Further information on the joint call for a taskforce available at:

http://www.fairagenda.org/taskforce_jointstatement