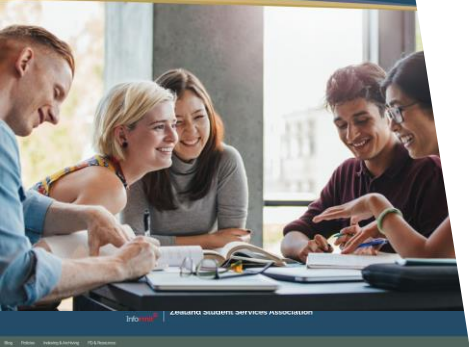


University Sport: Leading The Way

Addressing Gender Based Violence In Higher Education

Stephanie Taylor, President, Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association



The Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) is the peak professional organisation for tertiary education leaders and practitioners responsible for student engagement, wellbeing, and success in our region.

ANZSSA was established in the early 1970s and plays a leading role in supporting thought leadership, advocacy, professional development, and sharing good practice models and practice. Key initiatives include:

- ▶ Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (JANZSSA) and Blog sharing Voices from the Field and Conversational pieces.
- ▶ Annual ANZSSA Conference, a premier gathering of leaders, professionals, educators, and engaged sector partners across Australia and New Zealand who contribute to supporting students to thrive in higher education.
- ▶ Directors of Student Services of Australia and New Zealand (DOSSANZ) network of senior leaders with responsibility for leading the delivery of evidence-based, scalable, and impactful support for students.
- ▶ ANZSSA-managed networks, regional and webinar events, and communities of practice.
- ▶ **Uni Sport and ANZSSA have formed an intentional partnership** to collaborate on areas of shared strategic importance in relation to healthy university communities, including student psychological and physical wellbeing and safety.

The Changing National Landscape

- The past decade has seen an amplification of the regulatory requirements and community expectations of universities in relation to student mental health, wellbeing, and safety, in physical and virtual environments, extending beyond the campus.
- The focus on gender-based violence including sexual assault and harassment in Australia and across the globe has accelerated significantly during this time.
- In the Australian higher education sector, this has been influenced by many factors including The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032, advocacy from student and community groups, the release of the Hunting Ground (US) in 2015, and two Australian surveys undertaken in 2016 and 2021 (Change the Course and the National Student Safety Survey).
- The intensity of this focus presents challenges and complexities for the sector but is also an opportunity for universities to reflect on their whole of organisational ethos and approaches to supporting student safety and wellbeing and reflecting on areas of risk.

'Transformative': New national code would target gender-based violence at universities

Education Minister Jason Clare has introduced new laws in parliament aimed at addressing sexual harassment and assault in universities.



What Does This Mean for the Sector

- The Government released a new Action Plan Addressing Gender Based Violence in Higher Education in 2024 requiring higher education providers to embed a whole-of-organisation approach to prevent and respond to drivers of gender-based violence.
- In alignment with recommendations from the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, the National Student Ombudsman came into effect 1 February 2025 and has investigative and dispute resolution powers to ensure students have a complaints mechanism to use when they are not satisfied by their institution's response to a disclosure, report or complaint.
- Prior to the election, the Government tabled the intention to introduce the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence which proposes seven new Standards which will apply to all aspects of university life.
- Universities Australia is leading discussions regarding a third national student safety survey to be undertaken in Australia.



What Does This Mean for University Sport

- University Sport plays a key role in creating connections, sense of belonging and contributing to healthy university communities.
- University Sport attracts and engages with a diverse range of participants from within and outside the university through recreational, competitive and elite offerings.
- This presents both an opportunity and a responsibility to play a leadership role in supporting your university to deliver their whole of organisation approach to address gender-based violence in Higher Education.
- Sport participation at any level can be utilised as a powerful and influential lever for contributing to cultural change in relation to addressing **the drivers** of gender-based violence such as gender equity, inclusivity, and respect.
- Working in collaboration with university and wider community partners, University Sport can take a proactive leading role in role modelling and influencing understandings and behaviours in relation to the drivers of gender-based violence and creating environments where all students can thrive psychologically, physically, and academically.

Where to Start

ANZSSA and UniSport are committed to collaborating and supporting our members to play a leading role in responding to the Action Plan Addressing Gender Based Violence.

Many will already be well on this journey but if not

- You are not expected to be subject matter experts but you are a vital part of the university's whole of organisation eco-system.
- Familiarise yourself, your staff and your student leaders and participants with your University policies and educational resources regarding gender-based violence response, support and reporting to ensure staff and students feel informed, can be confident first responders and active by-standers, and comply with their obligations.
- Identify and reach out to your university's responsible entity for whole of organisation approach to responding to drivers of gender-based violence to be actively involved and ensure you stay up to date with information on support, response and reporting mechanisms.
- Internal and external collaboration is key – there is no need to reinvent the wheel and there are many existing networks and resources to support your efforts.

Go Team

Thank you

ANZSSA

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