

Call for the establishment of a 1800 Centralised National Hotline to respond to those impacted by sexual assault within University communities.

In August this year, the Australian Human Rights Commission will release the results of a national survey into sexual assault at universities. When this happens we expect an increase in disclosure of sexual assault. This will place existing university counselling services under additional strain. We hold several other concerns including:

- 1) Several university counselling services have long wait times, and survivors are sometimes unable to get an appointment for up to three weeks.
- 2) Most university counselling services are only open to currently enrolled students. This means that victim-survivors who have recently dropped out of their degree following sexual assault are unable to secure an appointment. We are aware of examples where rape survivors have been refused counselling appointments on this basis.
- 3) Most university counselling services employ counsellors who have broad skills, but who do not necessarily have specialised training in sexual assault trauma.
- 4) University counselling services are not always accessible to people in support roles and other staff at the university who may be impacted by Vicarious Trauma.

To that end, EROC Australia is joining with sexual assault advocate, Nina Funnell, and the National Union of Students (NUS) to call for the establishment of a National 1800 24/7 Hotline to be run by Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (RDVSA), who are the peak body in sexual assault telephone counselling. We believe that Universities Australia should be responsible for funding this initiative. RDVSA has estimated that a national 24/7 service would cost approximately \$1.3 million per annum.

We believe that a national, centralised 24/7 counselling call-service would mean that:

- 1) All people who are impacted by sexual assault within university communities are able to access support, regardless of whether they are still currently enrolled. This also includes alumni who may have experienced sexual assault in previous decades, who may be impacted around the release of the survey results.
- 2) Individuals who require counselling support would be able to access that support at the time they needed it most- without having to wait days or weeks for an appointment. This in turn would alleviate existing pressure on individual university counselling services.
- 3) There would be a consistent level and quality of counselling service delivered across the university sector, nation-wide.
- 4) Students and others who have confidentiality concerns about reporting an incident to a university counselling centre, would be able to access a private and confidential independent service.

Would you like to see a national hotline specifically for those impacted within universities by sexual assault?



If you would like to endorse the call for this initiative or would like more information on how it could be implemented please contact Sharna Bremner from EROC on 0401 026 249 or Nina Funnell on 0438 479 831.