MEDIA RELEASE: Explosive new report details extensive culture of sexual violence at Australian residential colleges

End Rape on Campus Australia has today released *The Red Zone Report*, an explosive 200-page document which details extensive hazing, sexual assault and sexual harassment at residential colleges around the country.

The release of the report coincides with the beginning of Orientation Week at the University of Sydney, known to sexual assault services as the ‘Red Zone’ due to the spike in rates of sexual assault that occur during this one week. Research has found that 1 in 8 sexual assaults at the USyd colleges happen during a single week of the year - O Week.

The report has uncovered dozens of hazing and initiation practices and examples of misogyny, including:

- Recent St Andrew’s College students reporting a practice of male students masturbating into female students’ shampoo, conditioner or body wash so that women unknowingly wash their hair with semen;
- An annual event at St John’s College called ‘the purge’, where students are encouraged to post embarrassing and graphic details online about other students’ sexual activity;
- Vile chants and songs, which are reproduced in the report;
- A practice known as ‘fresher grooming’ where predatory senior male students solicit and sexually rank junior female students, as demonstrated in organised events such as the ‘bait cruise’, ‘fresher five’ and ‘the bone room’.

The report - which contains graphic photos, screenshots and police reports - is co-authored by Walkley Award-winning investigative journalist Nina Funnell and End Rape on Campus Australia Ambassador Anna Hush. It draws together information obtained through freedom of information requests, student interviews, police reports, and academic research.

The report also includes a timeline charting 90 years of media reports of scandals which have plagued the USyd colleges, including abusive, coercive and humiliating rituals dating back to at least the 1930’s.

Several victims of hazing and sexual assault have spoken on record in the report in detailed case studies. Ralph Kelly and Kathy Kelly (the parents of Stuart and Thomas Kelly) have spoken out in the report, providing their police statements to EROC Australia which allege that their son Stuart may have taken his life after being hazed, and possibly sexually abused, at a Sydney University college.
Nina Funnell, lead author of the report, says: “We've been able to chart almost a century of abuse, hazing and vile conduct at these institutions. Today we are standing with all survivors of sexual assault and hazing from all colleges around the country, but especially the Sydney University colleges.

“We are backing the Kelly family’s firm demand for a coronial inquest into Stuart’s death and EROC Australia will be walking shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kellys on that journey.”

The report also places the issue of sexual assault and hazing firmly in a national context, with evidence of abusive practices at the colleges of all the Group of Eight universities, including the University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide, Monash University, UNSW, Australian National University, University of Western Australia and University of Queensland.

The report also includes case studies of scandals at James Cook University, Macquarie University, University of New England and Newcastle University.

The report makes a number of recommendations for change, including calling for anti-hazing laws in all states and territories, a federal task force to investigate sexual violence at Australian residential colleges, and a review of the state legislation governing the USyd colleges.

Anna Hush, co-author, commented: “The Red Zone Report shows that these poisonous cultures of violence and misogyny have been allowed to fester in these institutions for generations.”

“These traditions are ingrained in the very fabric of college life - nothing short of an overhaul of the entire college system will effectively address these problems.”

In the foreword to the report, Professor Catharine Lumby (Macquarie University) calls the report “sickening reading.” Lumby writes, “it goes much further than any report to date. It gives a graphic and detailed account of bullying, harassment and assault in these residences.”

A full copy of the report is available upon request.

For further comment:

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