

# Advocates celebrate Senate Inquiry recommendations for Taskforce on campus sexual violence and Inquiry into TEQSA

## For immediate release | Fair Agenda & End Rape on Campus Australia

This afternoon a cross-party Senate Inquiry has unanimously recommended the Cmth Govt:

- Commissions an independent review of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's response to sexual violence on university campuses.
- Implements an independent taskforce with strong powers, to oversight universities' policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus and in residences. The committee recommends that the taskforce provides:
  - an effective and accessible complaints process;
  - meaningful accountability for both universities and residences if standards are not met; and
  - transparency around which institutions are providing appropriate and effective responses and prevention initiatives.

The Committee's report states:

*"Given the evidence, the committee lacks confidence that the university sector (as a whole) will respond appropriately to the crisis without strong intervention. This is a regrettable conclusion that the committee does not come to lightly. The time for 'working groups' has passed. In the committee's view, a taskforce with effective powers should be immediately established to ensure accountability in the university sector."*

## End Rape on Campus Australia and Fair Agenda jointly responded:

"We thank the Committee for listening to survivors and advocates, and recognising the appalling actions of universities in this space. We welcome and celebrate their unanimous recommendation for a Taskforce on campus sexual violence and an Inquiry into TEQSA's responses to this issue."

"We also lack confidence that universities will respond appropriately to this crisis without strong government intervention, because they've been failing to do so for the past seven years."

"We are thrilled to hear the Senate's recommendation of an inquiry into TEQSA. We have been flabbergasted at the utter failure of TEQSA to address this issue over the past seven years, and believe intervention and accountability of the regulator are desperately needed."

"At the same time as many universities have demonstrated an unwillingness to make even basic changes to ensure student safety, TEQSA as the regulator has proven equally ineffective at holding them accountable for those failures."

"TEQSA has failed to deliver the accountability or change needed in this area. It is our analysis that TEQSA is not currently equipped to do what's needed to address sexual

violence at universities - from a mandate, capacity or expertise perspective, nor within their current regulatory framework.”

“We need urgent government action to deliver oversight and meaningful consequences for universities and residences who are adopting harmful approaches to sexual violence in their communities.”

“An independent Taskforce staffed with experts in violence prevention and response, with a government mandate to actually hold universities accountable, could start driving the change we desperately need in this area right now.”

“We can’t expect to fully understand or deal with these problems until there’s an effective way for students to report harmful university responses to their disclosures of sexual violence, that they can have confidence in using and that will actually lead to meaningful change.”

“We can’t expect to see change on this issue while universities are able to mark their own work. We need the government to give power to a Taskforce of experts who work with survivors every day, who know what an appropriate response looks like; and can intervene to improve standards at universities across the country.”

Additional comments attributable to Ms Sharna Bremner, End Rape on Campus Australia:

“We have supported several students to navigate the ridiculous, complicated and distressing process of seeking action from TEQSA to address the harm caused by their university’s response to sexual violence. TEQSA have not only failed to take any meaningful action, they have caused additional harm to student survivors themselves.”

“EROC have found engaging with TEQSA’s complaints/concerns process to be so detrimental to the wellbeing of student survivors’ that we actively advise students not to engage with the process and will no longer assist students to file a complaint/concern.

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