

On Tuesday, the Australian Human Rights Commission launched its' report into sexual assault on university campuses. It was an incredibly difficult and confronting day for so many survivors and student representatives that had spent decades fighting for recognition and action against sexual violence.

While it is a great honour to stand here and speak to you as President of the National Union of Students; we are here because of countless students before me who refused to back down on this issue. To them; I am grateful and so many students out there I know are grateful too.

The report this week again confirmed what we already knew. That sexual violence is severe and exists within university campuses. That countless victim-survivors have been silenced. That universities had dropped the ball. And that complacent attitudes toward perpetrators of this violence has done significant harm.

When I first read the report, my heart broke. Even after two years of working on the campaign, and hearing the devastating stories of students across Australia - it was shattering to confirm how endemic this issue is within universities.

Over 50% of university students experienced sexual harassment in 2015 or 2016; that's over 500 000 people across Australia. 500 000. over a 2 year period. So you can only imagine the thousands of students over decades and decades that aren't represented in the data. I want to recognise their voices and acknowledge their silent trauma.

Every single rape or sexual assault is a tragedy. There is no celebration or congratulations to be had. There is nothing to revel in having a few less sexual assaults than the university next door. Every university has an equal responsibility to tackle this.

But today, because of the incredible work by Andy Durbach and her team, we are finally at a turning point. It has been an immense honour and pleasure to work with Andy over the past 2 years, along with so many other students engaged in the project- that's what gives On Safe Ground such gravity- because it places students and survivors at the heart of it.

Here's a message to the Vice-Chancellors across Australia: these recommendations are the benchmark. This good-practice framework should form the basis of the response at your university. You have the data, this report tells you what needs to be done, the responsibility is now on you... and students across Australia will be watching.

NUS welcomes the *On Safe Ground's* report and we urge you to embrace and implement every one of the recommendations.

It is so great to see UNSW leading the way, we knew the severity of gendered violence and 2 days after the survey report, we are here launching the good-practice response that has been in the works for almost 2 years.

Andy - the National report is because of you, students have been placed at the centre because of you, and universities now have the tools to change the culture because of you.

This report will help prevent more victims being silenced and make clear to perpetrators the consequences of sexual violence will be severe.