

## 19 OCTOBER 2023 – MEDIA STATEMENT

University of Tasmania announce independent audit into how they are responding to, and preventing, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

The University of Tasmania have announced that they will be implementing an independent audit to investigate how the University responds to and prevents sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) following various calls from stakeholders both inside and outside of the University.

The TUSA State Council supports this announcement and view this as a direct response to student calls for greater transparency, accountability, and accessibility for students while acknowledging various reports being tabled on SASH at the University of Tasmania since 2018. The TUSA State Council view SASH as unacceptable in any capacity and recognizes the impact a lack of safety has on our student population, particularly our marginalized groups.

As of 2021, the National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) reported that 1 in 20 students had experienced sexual assault since starting university, while 1 in 6 students had experienced sexual harassment. The TUSA State Council recognizes that the University of Tasmania is not unique and students at the University face the same issues that students face at universities nationally.

The TUSA State Council also acknowledges the significant role that the student body has played in bringing this audit about. Notably, a student written article released in edition two of the student magazine *Togatus* earlier this year critiquing the Universities lack of action and transparency regarding SASH on campus since 2018 and calling for the University to do better for their students. In response to this, Deputy VC (Academic Division) of the University of Tasmania, Ian Anderson, provided official comment to the article, acknowledging that it is right for students to hold their university accountable and thanking them for making their expectations clear.

In their recent communication, the University announced that Lyn Walker would be the independent expert supported to conduct this audit. Walker has had an extensive

background in the prevention and support for those impacted by sexual violence and has worked with other universities such as the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne. The TUSA State Council support the appointment of Walker and acknowledge her significant contribution to supporting survivors of SASH in Australia.

As student representatives, TUSA State Council understand that students have had enough of being told what is best for us without first being involved in the conversation. Earlier this year the TUSA State Council supported multiple initiatives to improve visibility, including the STOP Campaign's I Deserve Safety, and the Safer Girls, Safer Women Project. The TUSA State Council will continue to provide such groups a platform from which to connect with students.

Given that details of how the audit will be conducted are yet to be released to students, we commit to advocating for a process that seeks to work with the students, not for the students. We will advocate for students to be centred as key stakeholders in throughout the entirety of the audit process, ensuring the student voice is represented holistically and captures the diversity of the student experience at our university.

**ENQUIRIES:** President Liam McLaren, 0456 087 863, [President@TUSA.utas.edu.au](mailto:President@TUSA.utas.edu.au)