



Academic Women in Leadership Programme 2017

Everyone's Responsibility:

The Potential for Bystander Intervention
at The University of Melbourne

01. November 2017

Introduction

Gender-based violence is a society-wide problem, and is a reflection of broader cultural norms. The recent survey findings of the Australian Human Rights Commission *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* (2017) highlights the responsibility of Universities to prevent these incidents, provide support to victims and create a culture where such behaviour is clearly unacceptable.¹

The University of Melbourne has publicly stated their full support for the nine recommendations to the university sector made by the Australian Human Rights Commission, and the ten-point action plan outlined by Universities Australia through their *Summary Findings & Actions* report.²

We also support the recommendations and the action plan. In addition, based on our research involving academic and grey literature, and through personal communication with stakeholders in the University and broader community, we believe that bystander intervention should be a core component of The University of Melbourne response to sexual harassment and sexual assault. Such an approach aligns with the fundamental values of our University, promotes a deeper relationship between the University and our communities, and provides a vehicle by which the University can champion sustainable change for the good of our students, our staff and society as a whole.

In this report we explain the concept of bystander intervention, briefly outline some of the most recent and relevant literature around implementation and outcomes, highlight contemporary work being done in this area, and identify potential stakeholders and collaborators who can help inform a University of Melbourne approach to Bystander Intervention. We note the University of Melbourne *Summary Findings & Actions* report² mentions Bystander Intervention as a component of an online module designed to influence culture and individual behaviours. However, we are convinced that a more comprehensive, well-designed and fully integrated bystander intervention program (for staff and students) has much greater potential to serve as a core component of the University response to this important issue.

Box 1: The Green Dot

A US based program with two phases involving an initial motivational presentation to staff and students to introduce the concept of the active bystander and build commitment to prevention, followed by small group intensive training for students identified peer opinion leaders. The training involves four modules consisting of a focus on strategy and definitions, identification of observable behaviours, obstacles and influences and building skills and confidence. Key elements of the program include the **3 D's – direct, distract and delegate** as strategies for active bystander interventions.

<https://alteristic.org/services/green-dot/green-dot-colleges/>

What is a bystander?

Bystanders are those who, while not directly involved, are present and therefore observe concerning incidents and behaviour. Within the literature, further distinctions are sometimes made between 'passive' and 'prosocial' or 'active' bystanders – thus distinguishing between those who observe violence, discrimination or offensive behaviour and take no action versus those who intervene.³

Why does Melbourne University need a bystander intervention program?

Box 2: Bringing in the bystander

Based on a community responsibility model, this US based program focuses on teaching bystanders how to intervene safely where there is a risk of sexual violence or where that violence is actually occurring. This program comprises either one or three 90-minute sessions which are delivered by a male and female co-facilitators and delivered to single sex or co-ed groups. In the US this program is used in more than 400 schools across 43 states as well as in the military and has spread internationally.

<https://cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations-research-center/bringing-bystander%C2%AE-person-prevention-program>

A striking feature of the *Change the Course* report was the lack of bystander response to sexual assault and sexual harassment. Nationally, 25% of students witnessed another student being sexually harassed at University and 1.1% of students witnessed another student being sexually assaulted but only a small proportion of those (21% and 37% respectively) took action in response to the incident.¹ At the University of Melbourne the proportion of students witnessing these incidents was even higher – 29% of University of Melbourne students witnessed sexual harassment & 1.6% witnessed sexual assault at University. Given these statistics, activating bystanders to respond to these incidents could have a tangible impact on preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault and/or supporting the victims exposed to these inappropriate behaviours.³

What are the obstacles and enablers to bystander intervention?

There are a number of factors which facilitate bystander intervention, and conversely known factors which create obstacles to intervention³ and these factors are specifically targeted in bystander intervention programs. Enablers of bystander action include: knowing how to recognise violence against women and awareness of its harm, feeling responsible for intervening and empathising with the victim, feeling capable of intervening and wanting to educate the perpetrator. Obstacles include the widespread acceptance of day-to-day sexism and continued support for traditional gender roles; not knowing how to intervene or feeling ill-equipped to intervene safely; encouragement of male group norms that perpetuate aggressive heterosexual masculinity.

How does bystander intervention fit within the Melbourne Model?

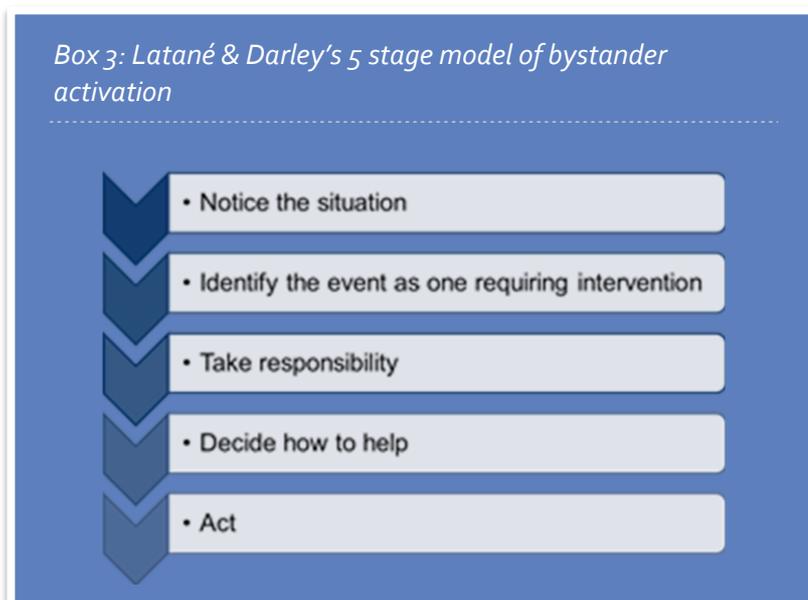
A bystander intervention program aligns with our University vision and our graduate attributes.^{4&5} The University aims to educate future leaders of society who are socially responsible citizens with respect for social and cultural diversity.⁴ We believe an explicit focus on encouraging our students to be active bystanders is entirely consistent with the vision for our graduates. This will empower students to be socially aware, to recognise sexual harassment and sexual assault in their environment, and to recognise their

responsibility to care for others. Providing our students with the knowledge of how and when to safely intervene in critical situations, how to seek assistance and support for victims, and providing them with practical skills and strategies is a fundamental responsibility of the University. Positioning the University as a community leader in addressing gender-based violence also reinforces the importance of the issue in the eyes of staff and students. Our vision for staff and students as active bystanders should be embedded throughout the University – it should inform the University People & Culture strategy, our HR processes (including onboarding of new staff members), our teacher training programs, our Occupational Health & Safety process, and our student orientation processes.

The findings of the *Change the Course* report offer the university an opportunity to lead a coordinated approach to gender-based violence, to develop new ways of partnering with our community, to develop deeper and longer-term relationships with our stakeholders and to drive sustainable cultural change in our community. As the leading University in Australia, and one of the leading Universities in the world, we believe it is our responsibility to do so. This problem demands widespread cultural change, and leaders of rational, scholarly and educated thought must weigh in at times like these. A carefully designed and evaluated bystander intervention should be a key component of our response.

What is a bystander intervention program?

Bystander intervention is an approach to prevent violence and support those who are the targets of violence. Theories of bystander intervention have been developed within fields such as criminology and psychology and more recent work has focused on its potential to reduce sex-based violence, particularly against women. The immediate purpose of bystander intervention programs is to increase the likelihood that those who observe incidents will act (when safe to do so) by providing them with knowledge, skills and confidence about what to do, and how to do it. Many bystander programs are informed by Latané and Darley's model that outlines the steps involved in bystander activation (**Box 3**).⁶



This involves sensitising participants to first notice there is an incident that justifies intervention. Part of the work of bystander programs then, is changing what is viewed as 'normal' or acceptable behaviour, particularly by men towards women, in relation to sexual activity and consent. However, they also seek to change more general expressions of negative attitudes towards women and those who do not conform to mainstream heterosexual or gender categories (such those who identify as LGBTI: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex). It follows then, that bystander intervention programs have the potential to change broader cultural norms about gender and the acceptance of gender-based violence.

What are the essential components of an effective bystander intervention program?

Recent reviews of bystander intervention programs - both as an approach to preventing violence against women³ and more specifically as an approach to gender-based violence in university settings⁷ provide helpful guidance as to the ideal approach. These reviews reinforce the importance of adopting an 'ecological' or 'whole system' approach to bystander intervention rather than just focusing on responses to critical incidents. This is due to the complexity of changing gender-based norms of which sexual harassment and sexual assault are one expression.

The reviews also suggest a bystander intervention program should involve activities at multiple levels rather than a one-off, discrete training program. For example, a social media campaign, posters, multiple training sessions delivered in various format and forms and mechanisms to embed a focus on gender-based respect in the day-to-day operations of the University. Training should comprise a sequence of learning activities which take participants from awareness-raising, to skill development (e.g. in identifying incidents as requiring intervention and appropriate responses) to behavioural and attitudinal change - including how to intervene (when safe to do so) in ways that promote gender equality and a reduction in gender-based violence.

Most reviews advise that programs should be delivered in person by trained facilitators (usually male and female), and that student involvement in the both design and local adaptation of programs is essential. In addition, a number of successful programs have specifically targeted student leaders as early program participants.³ Most university based programs have been developed in the United States or in the United Kingdom. The impact of cultural factors requires careful consideration when considering implementation within an Australian context. There is variation in cultural norms around gender, even between Anglophone

countries, and they differ in terms of attitudes to gender equality, 'idealised' and accepted expressions of masculinity and standards of acceptable behaviour. In addition, the different cultural norms of our local and international student cohorts must be considered carefully in adapting programs to our local situation⁸

Any implementation of bystander intervention programs should be carefully monitored and evaluated. Pilot testing is an essential first step to measure positive impact and assess for negative backlash effects (which has been reported in such programs). Careful consideration of appropriate outcome measures is fundamental to program evaluation. While the incidence of violence is notoriously difficult to measure reliably, numerous other outcomes are being developed and used to measure behaviours, knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions.

Box 4: Mentors in violence protection

MVP is a peer education/leadership training program that began with college athletes in the US and has more recently moved to focus on broader groups of student leaders. It aims to encourage student leaders to play a central role in prevention of violence against women. It is delivered as six or seven two-hour sessions and former participants are recruited to become future peer educators in the program. Presentations are delivered in large groups, or small sub-culture groups, and intensive training is offered to student leaders to encourage them to see themselves as leaders in gender equality promotion and gender violence prevention. MVP also conduct leadership training and orientation sessions for university staff and administrators.

<http://www.mvpstrat.com/mvp-programs/college/>

Are they effective?

Research suggests bystander intervention is most effective if bystanders are provided with active learning experiences to build skills; is undertaken in combination with efforts directed at changing peer norms about the acceptability of sexual violence; and if the intervention is supported by policies that provide clear information about how to intervene safely. Using multiple approaches to prevention is more effective. Combining a bystander-focused social marketing campaign with educational workshops to improve attitudes about being an active bystander is recommended.

The UK review of evidence for bystander intervention to prevent sexual and domestic violence in universities⁷ found evidence that well-designed bystander interventions which adhere to the public health criteria for effective prevention can decrease:

- perpetration of violence;
- the likelihood of perpetrating violence; decrease violence victimization;
- the incidence of community violence (perpetration);
- the incidence of community violence (victimization);
- rape myth acceptance;
- sexist attitudes; increase empathy towards rape survivors;
- decrease perception of peer sexist attitudes; decrease denial of violence as a problem.

The same review of evidence also suggests they can increase:

- the knowledge about violence (consent, prevalence, definitions);
- bystander interventions made;
- responsibility to make interventions;
- confidence and intention to intervene.

There is enormous potential for the University of Melbourne to engage in high impact, cross disciplinary research in this area, which could contribute to the aims of the University's Hallmark Initiative. MAEVe (the Melbourne Research Alliance to End Violence against women and their children) aim to bring together researchers from across the University in partnership with community, industry and government agencies, to tackle the problem of violence against women and their children. The expertise and networks of this group would be invaluable for the development and evaluation of a bystander intervention program.

Box 5: The intervention initiative

Arising from the Fenton et al evidence review⁷, this is a UK program for the prevention of sexual coercion and domestic abuse in university settings based on a theory of change model. It aims to encourage and empower students to act as "prosocial citizens" and is offered a free resource for Universities and higher education institutions. The program consists of eight 60-90 minute sessions with accompanying resources such as facilitator's notes, PowerPoint slides, participant handouts and details of the theoretical rationale for the program. Even with these additional program resources, it is strongly encouraged that experienced facilitators be used in the delivery of this program.

www.uwe.ac.uk/bl/research/InterventionInitiative

Current examples of effective bystander programs illustrate the diversity of approaches that can be adopted (**Boxes 1,2,4,5,6,8**). They differ in relation to the mode of delivery, reliance on student peer education, extent of time commitment, length of program and use of single or mixed-sex groups. A recent literature review undertaken by Dr. Rachel Fenton and colleagues for Public Health England⁷ informed the development of *The Intervention Initiative* (see Box 5). This group has made a series of online resources freely available to other Universities. This review, and the resulting program is an extremely useful resource for informing a bystander intervention program at The University of Melbourne.

Box 6: Who Are You

A free toolkit developed in Wellington, New Zealand, that uses group exercises and a short film to educate young people about the prevention of sexual violence and ethical sexual decision making. The toolkit can be used by educators to facilitate group sessions that are designed to be fun and interactive, and build skills in children and young people. This material is informed by the work of Professor Moira Carmody⁹ which focuses on sexual violence prevention using ethical decision-making strategies and the concept of bystander intervention. Elements of this toolkit are already used as part of intercollegial training by residential colleges at The University of Melbourne.

www.whoareyou.co.nz

Who is currently working in this space? Who can we partner with?

There are many different components to bystander intervention and a diversity of approaches and providers, and the costs of services vary considerably. In order to adopt a 'whole-of-system' or ecological approach we recommend that The University of Melbourne involve key stakeholders as collaborative partners in designing and implementing its bystander intervention program. Such partners could include international partners (e.g. the Intervention Initiative in the UK), those external to the University such as City of Melbourne, and those within the University already working on bystander initiatives (e.g. the Student Equity unit and the residential colleges) - see potential partner text box. Involving these parties would enable better evaluation of the options in program design as well as facilitate implementation and develop relationships.

As an example, Victoria University (VU) have implemented a Bystander Intervention training programme on all eight campuses in February 2017 via

- University Services
- Graduate Student Services
- Student Union & student society representatives
- HR & OH&S representatives
- People and Culture representatives
- Residential Colleges
- Intercollege Council
- MAEVe

Partners within The University of Melbourne

- University Colleges Australia
- Universities Australia
- Public Transport Victoria
- City of Melbourne
- VicHealth
- OurWatch
- Crimestoppers Victoria
- Victoria University (already has a multi-dimensional approach to bystander intervention underway)
- The Intervention Initiative (UK)

Partners within the community and university sector

an external contractor. In order to cater to the diverse student population, they consulted with AMES Australia to ensure a culturally sensitive programme would be provided by the contractor and purpose-built for VU. The university have offered the training on an opt-in basis during O-week, and all sports captains (male and female) were required to receive the training in order to be accredited to take their team to the University Games. VU have since joined with councils, health providers, and sports teams in the western suburbs in a “Preventing Violence Together” Partnership looking to role this out as a community.

Much work is already underway at The University of Melbourne (Box 7). Important initiatives are being undertaken at Colleges and Halls of Residence and the Intercollege Council, Universities Australia and with student groups and societies led by The Office of Student Equity (Director – Elizabeth Capp). However more could be done to coordinate these initiatives, to ensure a consistent message, to encourage learning between different groups, to integrate existing work, all in order to build towards larger-scale sustainable change on campus. To enable this, the University must maintain a consistent, high profile and long term focus on bystander interventions with appropriate resourcing.

Box 7: Bystander intervention activities on Campus

- Psychology Australia- Universities Australia is discussing the development of bystander materials with Psychology Australia
- Residential colleges- have been very active in providing bystander training for student leaders and tutors and to a varying degree residential students. They have used Epigeum (developers of online training for Universities) to develop “Consent Matters: Boundaries, Respect and Positive Intervention” and have piloted this in one college with the view to implementing in all colleges.
- University Services- are considering the use of “Consent Matters: Boundaries, Respect and Positive Intervention” and the whether this is mandatory is under discussion. There is no precedent for mandatory student training.
- The Office of Student Equity, Chancellery – has worked with Faculties, student societies and the Student Union to introduce Camp Wellbeing Advisers at student-run off-campus camps.
- Graduate Student Association- provides training for student organisations and groups. Although they have not developed specific training for Bystander intervention, they will be developing Wellbeing training and are interested in being further involved.
- Student Union- was not able to be contacted but would be an important group to engage.

Conclusion

As staff members within the Academic Women in Leadership Program we thank the University for supporting our professional development through participation in this program, and for the opportunity to contribute to this important issue. However, sexual harassment and sexual assault are not just women’s responsibility – they are issues for society as a whole.

The University of Melbourne has the opportunity to take a pivotal leadership role in addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault in our community. Our University’s Vision is to contribute to society in ways which enrich and transform lives, to meaningfully engage in the life, culture, and aspirations of our community, to be known for our service to our nation, and to provide opportunities for all our students to successfully participate in the educational, cultural and social life of the University.⁵ The *Change the Course*

report¹, through highlighting the pervasive and persistent nature of sexual harassment and sexual assault in our community, stresses the depth of this problem. The University of Melbourne *Summary of Findings & Actions* document² draws attention to the University's commitment to address these issues. Our report underscores the potential for bystander intervention approaches to strengthen the University of Melbourne response in addressing this important issue, whilst also reinforcing the university vision, the attributes of our graduate, and the potential to deepen our relationships within our community and champion sustainable change for the good of our students, our staff and society as a whole. Responding to this issue is everyone's responsibility.

Box 8: Rise Above the Pack

A community safety campaign developed that aims to shift the conversation from victim blaming to perpetrator behaviour, and engage men and women in creating safe spaces for women. The project has a focus on positive bystander intervention, and engages men as ambassadors. The project was created and delivered by YWCA Adelaide funded through a one-year Crime Prevention grant from the South Australian Attorney-General's Department. *Rise Above the Pack* invites men to be leaders in their communities and in their daily lives – willing to challenge the status quo when respect and safety of women is in question.

www.riseabovethepack.com.au

Key References

1. Australian Human Rights Commission. (2017). Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities (2017). *Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission*. Available at https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRC_2017_ChangeTheCourse_UniversityReport.pdf
2. James, R & Capp E. (2017) University of Melbourne Summary Findings and Actions [in response to] Respect Now Always: National student survey of sexual assault and sexual harassment in university communities (1 August 2017). http://safercommunity.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2439409/rna-unimelb-summary.pdf
3. Powell, A. (2011). Review of Bystander Approaches in Support of Preventing Violence Against Women. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/review-of-bystander-approaches-in-support-of-preventing-violence-against-women>
4. The University of Melbourne (2016) The Melbourne Graduate. Available at <http://provost.unimelb.edu.au/teaching-learning/the-melbourne-graduate>
5. The University of Melbourne (2015) The University of Melbourne Strategic Plan 2015-2020: Growing Esteem. Available at https://about.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1462065/11364-GROWING-ESTEEM-2015-FA-WEB.pdf
6. Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1970). *The unresponsive bystander: Why doesn't he help?* Appleton-Century-Crofts. Cited in Powell, A. (2011). Review of Bystander Approaches in Support of Preventing Violence Against Women. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/review-of-bystander-approaches-in-support-of-preventing-violence-against-women>
7. Fenton, R. A., Mott, H. L., McCartan, K., & Rumney, P. (2016). A review of evidence for bystander intervention to prevent sexual and domestic violence in universities. Available at <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/28656/>
8. Fenton, R. A., & Mott, H. (2017). The bystander approach to violence prevention: Considerations for implementation in Europe. *Psychology of Violence*.
9. Carmody, M. (2009). Sex and Ethics: The Sexual Ethics Education Program for Young People. South Yarra, Vic. Palgrave

List of Contacts

In developing this report, we contacted the following individuals and organisations:

The University of Melbourne

- Elizabeth Capp, Director, Student Equity 
- Dan Persaud, Director, Wellbeing
- Boernn McCarthy, Program Manager, University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association
- Anicca Maleedy-Main, Academic Convenor, Melbourne Research Alliance to End Violence against Women and their Children (MAEVe), Department of General Practice, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Services
- Professor Sarah Wilson, Head Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, Lead of the People and Culture Strategy, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
- Yan Zhuang, President of Student Union (unable to contact)

Residential colleges within The University of Melbourne

- Sean Burke, Newman College and current President of Colleges, University of Melbourne 
- Dr. Nicholas C M Hill, Deputy Head of College, International House
- Dr Sergio Fabris, Vice Principal St. Hilda's College
- Ms Rachel Lechmere, Dean and Deputy Principal, St. Mary's College
- Jake Workman, Dean of Students, Queen's College
- Damien Powell, Principal, Janet Clarke Hall
- Fiona Cadorel, Vice Principal, Janet Clarke Hall
- Donna Davies, Director of Students, Fair Treatment Act, Janet Clarke Hall
- Margie Welsford, Whitley College
- Rufus Black, Master, Ormond College

External to The University of Melbourne

- Stephanie Francas, Senior Marketing and Communications Advisor, **OurWatch** 
- Nancy Pierorazio, Senior Policy Officer, City Safety, Social Investment Branch, **City of Melbourne**
  
- Jocelyn Crawford, Director Enterprise Assurance, Safety and Environment, Corporate Services Division, **Public Transport Victoria**

- Natalie Russell, Principal Program Officer, Mental Wellbeing, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) 
- Natasha Mikitas, Training Manager, The Full Stop Foundation (**Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia**)
- Dylan Styles, Respect and Responsibility Student Engagement Officer, **Victoria University**   
- Cathy Rhodes, General Manager of Operations, **Crimestoppers Victoria** 
- Krista Seddon, Director, Prevention of Violence against Women, **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria**
- Dr. Rachel Fenton, **University of Exeter** Law School & co-convenor of **Universities Against Gender-based Violence**   
- Camilla Gebicki, *Change the Course* project manager, **Australian Human Rights Commission**

Key:



agree to consult



agree to share resources



agree to collaborate

The report was prepared by:

- Associate Professor Susan Ainsworth, Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Economics
- Associate Professor Fiona Russell, Principal Research Fellow, Department of Paediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences
- Dr Anna Ryan, Senior Lecturer, Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences
- Dr Kathryn Stok, Senior Lecturer, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Melbourne School of Engineering

as part of the Academic Women in Leadership Programme 2017.

01. November 2017