

Resolution of Council

25 November 2024

Item 16.4

The City of Sydney Council Condemns the Gender Based Violence at Sydney University

Moved by Councillor Maxwell, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the findings of the Red Zone report, co-authored by investigative journalist, Nina Funnell and End Rape on Campus Ambassador, Anna Hush, including:
 - (a) that a culture of misogyny and sexism is rife within residential colleges;
 - (b) a longstanding history of aggressive, sexually violent and dangerous behaviours exhibited within residential colleges, including gang rape and murder, over many decades;
 - (c) that hazing and ritual humiliation of students within residential colleges has a long and well-documented history, with victim-survivors reporting self-harm and, in some cases, suicide; and
 - (d) that the very social structure of the residential colleges creates the conditions that enable and propagate rampant abuse and misogyny;

(B) Council further note:

- (i) on 30 October 2024, University of Sydney students were filmed tearing up the Red Zone Report, which exposed a rape and sexual violence epidemic in universities. The incident occurred during a USYD Student Representative Council meeting, when two conservative club members destroyed copies of the report on sexual violence and hazing in university colleges;

- (ii) in response, over 100 students and community members attended a vigil hosted by the USYD Women's Collective. Speakers, including outgoing and newly elected Women's Officers, emphasised the need to abolish university colleges to prevent misogyny and violence towards women;
 - (iii) reports of sexual assault and harassment at the University of Sydney more than doubled last year, with nearly 250 victims, according to the second Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct;
 - (iv) that there currently exists a campaign calling for the abolition of the University of Sydney colleges by some advocacy groups in Sydney;
 - (v) National Survivors Day on 12 November commemorates the courage of survivors of sexual assault and institutional abuse, as well as their supporters and whistleblowers across Australia;
 - (vi) in April 2024, an international student from the University of Sydney tragically died in the Westfield Bondi Junction stabbing attacks;
 - (vii) in August 2024, another University of Sydney student, Xiaoting, was also tragically killed as a result of gender-based violence;
 - (viii) in 2023, another local university student from within the Sydney Local Government Area, Lilie James, was horrifically murdered in her workplace at St Andrew's Cathedral School as a result of gender-based violence;
 - (ix) the critical need for the University of Sydney to be a safe space for all students and staff, and stress the importance of fully implementing the Red Zone Report to prevent future violence at the University of Sydney;
 - (x) the ongoing work required to prevent sexual assault and harassment by all universities, and the failure of the Sydney University Colleges to address these issues effectively;
 - (xi) the City of Sydney has continually supported efforts to combat gendered violence by working with local groups, key stakeholders, and governments at all levels to assist victim-survivors;
 - (xii) the City of Sydney's continued advocacy, in particular recognising the March 2024 Gender-Based Violence Lord Mayoral Minute, which emphasised the City's role in leading and supporting interagency networks to improve responses to gender-based violence and to promote gender equality; and
 - (xiii) that tackling gender-based violence is a shared responsibility at local, state, and federal levels, with ongoing collaborative engagement and measures consistently taken to prevent such tragedies in the future;
- (C) Council recognise the collective efforts and campaign for decades to end these practices, including the long-running campaign led by the University of Sydney Women's Collective to abolish the colleges;
- (D) Council reaffirm that the City of Sydney Council condemns acts of gender based violence in all forms and that this includes any gender-based violence at local universities; and

- (E) Council adopt the position that:
- (i) all students should live free from the threat of sexual violence, bullying, intimidation and hazing rituals; and
 - (ii) all students deserve access to affordable, accessible and safe housing;
- (F) the Lord Mayor be requested to:
- (i) write to the Vice Chancellor, Chancellor and heads of all residential colleges of the University of Sydney:
 - (a) to express the City of Sydney's denunciation of gender-based violence and affirm its commitment to stand in solidarity with victims of gendered based violence alongside Sydney Universities in the City of Sydney Local Government Area;
 - (b) about the failure to make substantial changes to prevent and change attitudes towards sexual assault, sexual harassment, bullying, hazing, and alcohol abuse in the residential colleges. In addition to pushing for further commitments from the University to prevent gender-based violence and their causes in all colleges in the future; and
 - (c) requesting that the University implements the findings and recommendations of the 2018 Red Zone Report into Sexual Violence and Hazing in Australian university residential colleges undertaken by 'End Rape on Campus Australia'. This includes committing to reforming all University of Sydney residential colleges to better protect students on campus;
 - (ii) write to NSW Premier, Chris Minns; NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, Steve Whan; NSW Minister for Education, Prue Car; and the Federal Minister for Education, Jason Clare, requesting a response on the actions that the Federal and NSW Governments will take to prevent these types of incidences occurring in future at the University of Sydney and at other universities, as well as the measures taken to address this issue at the University of Sydney specifically; and
 - (iii) write to the Women's Officer of the University of Sydney to thank them for organising the University of Sydney vigil to remember and recognise victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

The substantive motion, as varied by consent, was carried on the following show of hands –

Ayes (9) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Ellsmore, Gannon, Kok, Maxwell, Thompson, Weldon, Wilson and Worling

Noes (1) Councillor Miller.

The motion, as varied by consent, was carried.

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