

## **Victorian Law Students' Society - Sexual Harassment Working Group**

### **Mission Statement**

The Victorian Law Students' Society is a group committed to addressing the issue of sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour within the legal profession. Sexual harassment impacts an overwhelming number of members of the legal profession and its continued prevalence needs to be addressed. As law students we have a responsibility to our peers, our profession, and our community to take action. We must speak up against inappropriate behaviour, advocate for change from our institutions, and treat one another with empathy and respect.

This issue is not one which is easily addressed. It will not disappear overnight. It does not come solely from one kind of action. It must be dealt with as a community, with a perspective of longevity, and with recognition that it is a complex space to navigate. We are not the first group who has sought to generate positive change in this space and unfortunately, we may not be the last. However, by openly working together we believe this is a positive step toward creating the best conditions for our future.

This statement is a commitment by the student representative bodies of each law cohort across the state to dedicate significant time, consideration, and effort to advocating and generating change around sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour within the legal profession. As a group we are developing communal resources, behavioural expectation guidelines, and event safety procedures to ensure that every student who enters a law degree in Victoria will receive education and information that is aligned and consistent. We believe that this will enable the next generation of young lawyers to share a unified perspective on what is appropriate behaviour, how to respond to concerns, and what we can each do as individuals to better ourselves in this space.

We cannot do this alone. Your student representatives need your help. This issue is too complex and too big to be dealt with by some alone. Change must come from everyone in our community. We must demand better of ourselves, our peers, and our organisations. It is the responsibility of every single student to acknowledge the immense privilege that comes with accessing the calibre of higher education we receive within the law. If we cannot stand by our own profession as being one in which we are all fit and proper people, we cannot then stand by our communities. We must ensure our own integrity to be accessible to those accessing the law through us.

We owe it to ourselves, to our community, and to the advocates who have come before us to do more. Over the next year and beyond we will continue to collaborate to create change in this space and we hope that you will join us in our endeavours.

We are committed to:

- Developing policy scaffolds for use across all Victorian Law Students' Society's and Associations.
- Implementing uniform event safety procedures.
- Providing resources and relevant support services information to students as needed.
- Working collaboratively by sharing resources, information, and advocacy.

These commitments will expand and be communicated to our members as the working group continues their work to address this issue.

Signed by the 2020/2021 Victoria Law Students' Society and Association President's

Georgia Gilbert  
Deakin Law Students' Society - Georgia Gilbert

Mackenzie Spong  
Deakin Law Students' Society Geelong - Mackenzie Spong

Aayushi Patel  
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Thea Stephenson  
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Claire Tucker-Morrison  
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Tyra O'Neil  
St Patrick's Law Students' Society (ACU) - Tyra O'Neil

Zachary Plant  
Swinburne Law Students' Society - Zachary Plant

Date Signed: 9 September 2021