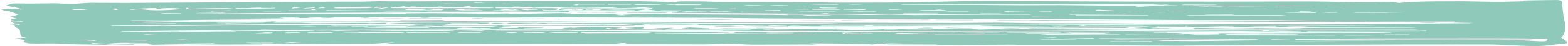
July 2023

Submission in response to the TEQSA Sexual Harm Good Practice Note Consultation Paper



Prepared by Our Watch

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past and present.

# About Our Watch

[Our Watch](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/) is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All Australian governments are members of Our Watch.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. We aim to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes and social structures that drive violence against women.

Guided by our ground-breaking national framework, [*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/change-the-story-a-shared-framework-for-the-primary-prevention-of-violence-against-women-in-australia), we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women, especially those stemming from gender inequality. We work with governments, practitioners and the community, at all levels of Australian society, to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work and socialise.

# Our work in higher education settings

As one of the five big reach settings identified in *Change the Story*, primary prevention in higher education represents a key activity area for Our Watch under the [*National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2022/national_plan_to_end_violence_against_women_and_children_2022-2032.pdf) (National Plan).

The Commonwealth Government has funded Our Watch under the National Plan to undertake prevention work in universities over the next 5 years. Our Watch are currently engaged with 34 universities and 5 TAFEs nationally to support implementation, providing tailored expert advice and facilitating capacity development and engagement activities. Future work will see expanded engagement with universities and TAFEs and scaling up prevention activity and learning options in tertiary education, including through the implementation of [*Educating for Equality*](https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/03162916/1.1-Educating-for-Equality.pdf)*,* [*Respect and Equality in TAFE*](https://tertiaryeducation.ourwatch.org.au) and [*Upskilling Pre-service Professionals*](https://tertiaryeducation.ourwatch.org.au/resource/upskilling-pre-service-professionals-to-support-the-prevention-of-gender-based-violence-an-overview/).

Our Watch has also engaged in a 5-year partnership with Victoria University that aims to test and learn from implementation of *Educating for Equality* and [*Respect and Equality in TAFE*](https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/30104804/Respect-and-Equality-in-TAFE-National-Guide.pdf) in Victoria University as a dual sector institution. The partnership activity will work across learning, teaching, research and workplace functions of the university and be undertaken as a shared and intersectional approach to preventing gender-based violence.

The Commonwealth Government has also funded Our Watch to undertake prevention work in TAFEs over the next 5 years.

Our Watch are currently engaged with 5 TAFEs in the ACT, NT, SA, and Tasmania, to test the [Respect and Equality in TAFE framework](https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/30104804/Respect-and-Equality-in-TAFE-National-Guide.pdf) in new jurisdictions. Our Watch will broaden to a national focus once this phase of testing and implementation has completed in December 2024.

# About this submission

The revision of the TEQSA Sexual Violence Good Practice Note (Practice Note) presents an important opportunity to embed primary prevention approaches to stop sexual violence before it starts. The evidence is clear that a comprehensive and holistic approach to preventing violence against women and other gender-based violence should involve a suite of interdependent and interlinked strategies.

This submission outlines opportunities to integrate the primary prevention evidence base including actions that address the broader social context of gender inequality that gives rise to gender-based violence.

Our Watch looks forward to contributing to the development of the revised practice note as useful. We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of this submission or to provide further, more detailed advice, including reviewing the next draft.

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# Summary

The revision of the TEQSA Sexual Violence Good Practice Note provides an important opportunity to embed primary prevention approaches to stop sexual violence before it starts.

Our Watch considers that there is an opportunity to more clearly integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note. In doing so, Our Watch suggests that the practice note include guidance for higher education institutions about implementing evidence-based actions (based on those outlined in *Change the story*) that specifically address these gendered drivers of violence

In particular, Our Watch recommends that TEQSA more clearly integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note by:

* Providing a clear description of primary prevention which outlines the difference between prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.
* Including information about the gendered drivers of sexual violence.
* Including practice examples that align with the essential evidence-based actions outlined in *Change the story* that specifically address the gendered drivers.
* Making a connection between gender inequality and gender-based violence.
* Including practice examples of initiatives to advance gender equality in higher education institutions.
* Recognising a whole-of-setting approach as best practice in preventing sexual violence
* Referencing the Our Watch evidence base [*Educating for Equality*](https://tertiaryeducation.ourwatch.org.au/tools-and-resources/?term=University) and *Respect and Equality in TAFE* as best practice whole-of-setting frameworks for primary prevention in higher education and include Figure 1 from p.14 in *Educating for Equality* and Figure 2 from p.5 of *Respect and Equality in TAFE*.
* Encouraging higher education institutions to develop robust outcomes frameworks that include distinct indicators and outcomes related to primary prevention.

# Primary prevention of sexual violence

## What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention aims to stop violence before it starts by addressing the structural causes and underlying drivers of violence. Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions that give rise to violence, reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify, or promote such violence and shifting the power imbalances and social norms, structures and practices that drive and normalise it.

In outlining a national, population-level, evidence-based approach to primary prevention of violence, Our Watch’s national framework [*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/)(*Change the story*)identifies gender inequality as setting the social context in which violence against women occurs and makes clear that the drivers of this violence are gendered. The factors that *Change the story* terms the ‘gendered drivers’ of violence arise from gender-discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is both more likely, and more likely to be tolerated and even condoned. The gendered drivers of violence against women are:

* Driver 1: Condoning of violence against women.
* Driver 2: Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life.
* Driver 3: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
* Driver 4: Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control

Our Watch considers that there is an opportunity to more clearly integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note. In doing so, the practice note should include guidance for higher education institutions about implementing evidence-based actions (based on those outlined in *Change the story*) that specifically address these gendered drivers of violence. This approach would ensure alignment with *Change the story* which is the nationally adopted framework that underpins the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 and national work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

In addition to the drivers outlined above, *Change the story* also identifies a number of reinforcing factors. These factors, such as harmful use of alcohol can increase the frequency or severity of violence but are not the cause of such violence. As a result, strategies and initiatives targeting these reinforcing actors are important to address, but actions focused on addressing the drivers underpin evidence based prevention solutions.

**Recommendation:**

Our Watch recommends that TEQSA integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note by:

* + Providing a clear description of primary prevention which outlines the difference between prevention, early intervention and response.
  + Including information about the gendered drivers of sexual violence.
  + Including practice examples that align with the essential evidence-based actions outlined in *Change the story* that specifically address the gendered drivers.

## Gender equality and primary prevention

The national and international research compiled in *Change the story* clearly demonstrates that violence against women is driven by gender inequality. As a result, tackling gender inequality and advancing and normalising gender equality at every level in society are essential to preventing gender-based violence.

Preventing gender-based violence is not just about changing individuals – it is also about changing systems, institutions, social norms and culture in which individuals develop and maintain their attitudes towards violence. As workplaces, education providers and community hubs, higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to contribute to gender equality. As a place of learning, growth, development and socialisation, higher education institutions can contribute to gender equality outcomes for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. This involves contributing to changing the structures, attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality and allow violence to occur.

Many institutions in the higher education sector are already doing work towards advancing gender equality, however it is often not integrated into practice that recognises its contribution towards the primary prevention of gender-based violence.

**Recommendation:**

Our Watch recommend that TEQSA integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note by:

* + Making a connection between gender inequality and gender-based violence.
  + Including practice examples of initiatives to advance gender equality in higher education institutions.

## Adopting a ‘whole-of’ setting approach to primary prevention

*Change the story* tells us that we need to work across all areas of an institution to make lasting change to reduce gender-based violence. All efforts undertaken by higher education institutions need to sit within a broader, institution-wide strategy that addresses the drivers of gender-based violence.

Our Watch has developed a number of ‘whole of setting’ frameworks to support primary prevention in higher education settings. A whole-of-setting approach recognises that higher education institutions are workplaces, places of teaching, learning and research, and spaces where people live and engage in social activities is best practice in preventing gender-based violence. A ‘whole-of setting’ model extends beyond initiatives that target individual level change to assess the gendered norms, practices and structures of the institution as a whole. Our Watch recommends that a whole of setting approach is recognised as best practice in the practice guide, including reference to the following evidence frameworks:

### Educating for Equality

[*Educating for Equality*](https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/03162916/1.1-Educating-for-Equality.pdf) aims to provide universities with a whole-of-university approach that can help guide, support and build upon existing work to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence.

A diagram of a key lever

Description automatically generatedDeveloped in collaboration with Universities Australia, and launched in 2021, *Educating for Equality* is the first of its kind in the world. The whole of university approach includes research staff, professional staff, administrators, contractors, colleges and other accommodation providers, clubs and societies, and business partners. This whole-of-university approach aims to:

* draw together the entire university community in a joint commitment to the prevention of gender-based violence
* support a primary prevention approach in universities that is holistic and underpinned by a long-term strategy and sector coordination
* highlight the role everyone within a university has to play in creating a culture where rigid gender stereotypes are challenged, gender-based discrimination is unacceptable and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled
* provide practical tools and resources to support universities.

Figure 1: Whole-of-university model for the prevention of gender-based violence

### Respect and Equality in TAFE

[*Respect and Equality in TAFE*](https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/30104804/Respect-and-Equality-in-TAFE-National-Guide.pdf) is a framework which takes a whole-of-institution approach to support TAFEs to prevent violence against women through implementing strategies for gender equality. The *Respect and Equality in TAFE* project was piloted in five TAFEs in Victoria, resulting in a co-designed framework and resources. Our Watch is now expanding this work across national jurisdictions.

The *Respect and Equality* approach has been divided into five key domains: workplace, students, teaching and learning, communications, and industry and community. Taking action in each of the domains can support institutions to build a culture of respect and equality across the entire institution.

A diagram of a culture and culture

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Figure 2: Five key domains of the Respect and Equality approach

**Recommendations:**

Our Watch recommends that TEQSA integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note by:

* + Recognising a whole-of-setting approach as best practice in preventing sexual violence.
  + Referencing the Our Watch evidence base [*Educating for Equality*](https://tertiaryeducation.ourwatch.org.au/tools-and-resources/?term=University) and *Respect and Equality in TAFE* as best practice whole-of-setting frameworks for primary prevention in higher education and include Figure 1 from p.14 in *Educating for Equality* and Figure 2 from p.5 of *Respect and Equality in TAFE*.

## Monitoring and reporting on primary prevention outcomes

Monitoring and reporting on progress towards preventing violence and advancing gender equality in higher education will contribute to providing important transparency and accountability to TEQSA, and to students and staff.

There is value in higher education institutions being encouraged to report on indicators beyond incidents of, and responses to, sexual violence. Our Watch suggests that the revised practice note include recommendations for higher education institutions to develop outcomes frameworks that include distinct indicators and outcomes related to primary prevention to measure the effectiveness of prevention efforts over time. The criteria for outcome indicator selection should be measurable and relevant for the higher education context and aligned with the gendered drivers of violence outlined in *Change the story*.

There is also an opportunity for TEQSA to create a national outcomes framework which would support the wide-spread collection of data to measure, monitor and report on sector-level progress.

**Recommendation:**

Our Watch recommends that TEQSA integrate the primary prevention evidence-base into the revised practice note by:

* + Encouraging higher education institutions to develop robust outcomes frameworks that include distinct indicators and outcomes related to primary prevention.