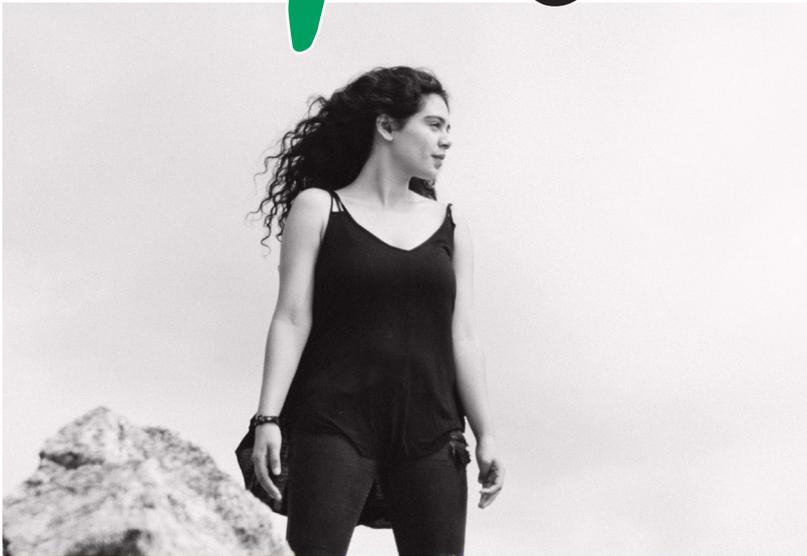




# YACTION

ISSUE 4 | JULY 2018



## Welcome to the fourth edition of YAction!

YAction highlights YWCA Canberra's advocacy initiatives, the work of kindred organisations and the issues that are important to our members and local community.

### So whYAction?

Advocacy is at the heart of the work we do at YWCA Canberra, and with the vision of girls and women thriving, we are focused on creating change by engaging with diverse and at-risk groups and providing leadership through evidence based policy and research.

Our advocacy agenda is directly informed by the work that YWCA Canberra undertakes across the ACT, drawing on the experience and knowledge generated by our programs and services.

YAction aims to amplify the voices and achievements of gender equality activists and organisations, increasing awareness of critical issues and presenting opportunities for our members, friends and supporters to get involved.

Ultimately, we hope to strengthen a movement that works together to achieve gender equality in the ACT.

We encourage you to explore YWCA Canberra's flagship advocacy platform, Leading the Change: The Pathway to Gender Equality and reach out if you're interested in supporting our work.

### In this edition we:

- Speak to Cara Gleeson from Our Watch on the importance of Respectful Relationships education in addressing gender inequality in Australia.
- Discover how a positive definition of consent will support justice in sexual assault cases.
- Explore PwC's corporate leadership in diversity and inclusion.
- Talk to Sharna Bremner, founder of End Rape on Campus, about the organisation's work to end sexual violence at universities and residential colleges.
- Share the highlights from our first advocacy briefing.

# Our WATCH

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CARA GLEESON FROM OUR WATCH

[Our Watch](#) was established in 2014 as the national foundation for the prevention of violence against women and their children. Our Watch's work into the prevention of gender-based violence has found that gender inequality and unequal gender norms are drivers of violence against women. Their research has also found that violence is preventable through complementary public education campaigns, programs, policy and legislative responses. In their evidence paper on the inclusion of Respectful Relationships education in schools in Australia, Our Watch established that the education of children and young people in developing and maintaining respectful relationships is essential to achieve the results of the [National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022](#).

YWCA Canberra spoke with Cara Gleeson, Director of Practice Leadership at Our Watch and former YWCA Canberra board member, to find out more about the importance of Respectful Relationships education to address gender inequality in Australia, how schools and communities can work together to support young people to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and how to navigate issues such as consent, gender and power within relationships.

### Why should children and young people's education be a focus for the prevention of gender-based violence?

Our Watch, alongside the many other organisations, such as YWCA Canberra, that are working to end violence against women, know that we need generational cultural change. Given this, the next generation is such a great place to work with.

The Australian education system offers near universal reach to children and young people across our country. With over 9,500 schools, 3.7 million students and 250,000 teachers across Australia, the national education system is an extremely powerful platform to be able to reach children and young people when they're first experiencing and forming attitudes about what constitutes healthy relationships.

That is why it is essential that every child and young person in Australia receives age-appropriate, evidence-based Respectful Relationships education as part of their school experience.

Together with a comprehensive program of primary prevention activities across multiple settings, Respectful Relationships education can create the generational change required to free Australia from gender-based violence.

### Why is the Respectful Relationships curriculum a best practice approach to ensuring children and young people can develop healthy relationships?

Respectful Relationships education is one of the most evaluated techniques for the primary prevention of violence against women. Internationally and nationally there are some fantastic evaluations that show the positive difference that an evidence based approach to Respectful Relationships education has on students' skills, attitudes and knowledge of violence against women. There are also studies from Northern America that show a long-term reduction in rates of perpetration and victimisation for young people who have participated in Respectful Relationships education.

Best practice in Respectful Relationships education goes beyond curriculum and the students as the benefactors of this work taking a whole of school approach. Schools are like 'mini communities' where respect and equality can be modelled by students, their families, principals and school leadership, teachers and other school staff and the broader community. This means that we shouldn't only be focusing in on what students may learn in classroom activity, but what they absorb from every interaction they have throughout their education. A whole school approach brings together the evidence base on primary prevention in the workplace through organisational change and student focused activity, with a dash of community engagement.

Everyone involved in the school community, has a chance to create and contribute to a culture

where gender stereotypes and violence-supportive attitudes are not tolerated and gender equality is promoted throughout the school's culture, policies and practices.

### How should Respectful Relationships education be delivered within schools?

Respectful Relationships education should involve the whole school approach and have activity, planning and resourcing through a whole school approach.

A key part to Respectful Relationships education is for the approach to have a gendered analysis and recognise the role of inequality, gender, and power in the occurrence of gender-based violence. Without this analysis, Respectful Relationships education will not be transformative and meet its aim to drive cultural change and create an Australian community without violence against women.

### Should Respectful Relationships programs only be delivered to children and young people, or are there other groups of society that would benefit from the education?

[Change the Story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia](#), proposes direct participation programs (which includes the student focused element of Respectful Relationships education) as a proven and promising technique. But there is great opportunity for direct participation programs to reach people, not just children and young people, where they work, live, rest and play.

Direct participation programs, that address the drivers of violence against women in Australia and that seek cultural change, can be delivered in sporting clubs, workplaces, universities and many other settings.

### When practitioners speak about the Respectful Relationships program, they talk about primary prevention. What does that mean and why is that important in reducing gender-based violence?

Respectful Relationships education is a proven and promising technique of primary prevention. Primary prevention is different from work that responds to violence that has already occurred

(commonly known as tertiary prevention or response services), or work that intervenes and supports when there's a high likelihood of violence occurring (commonly known as early intervention or secondary prevention). Primary prevention focuses on changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children.

It's extremely important for women's safety to have appropriately funded and resourced response and early intervention services. However, without funding and resourcing for primary prevention, we will never see an actual change to the story that we have in Australia, where one in three women experience physical violence over their lifetime.

### Can you explain what should be included in Respectful Relationships education programs?

#### Any approach must:

1. address drivers of gender-based violence
2. have a long-term vision, approach and funding
3. take a whole school approach
4. establish mechanisms for collaboration and coordinated effort
5. ensure integrated evaluation and continual improvement
6. provide resources and support for teachers
7. use age-appropriate, interactive and participatory curriculum.

A key part to Respectful Relationships education is for the approach to have a gendered analysis and recognise the role of inequality, gender, and power in the occurrence of gender-based violence. Without this analysis, Respectful Relationships education will not be transformative and meet its aim to drive cultural change and create an Australian community without violence against women.

It's important to note that these core elements are for an education system that's integrating Respectful Relationships education within its work. While they can serve as a good guideline for community organisations like YWCA Canberra, schools and teachers, some of these elements may not be able to be influenced by individual schools or staff. This about supporting all schools within an education system to take a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships education.

### Do you think the elimination of gender-based violence is achievable through the implementation of programs such as Respectful Relationships?

In short, definitely. Change the Story is a long-term roadmap to how Australia can be free from gender-based violence. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but it's definitely possible. The essential actions set out by Change the Story is always a good starting point:

1. promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life
2. challenge condoning of violence against women
3. promote women's independence and decision making

4. challenge gender stereotypes and roles
5. strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships.

To build a future free from gender-based violence, we must challenge the historically entrenched beliefs and behaviours that have put gender inequality firmly in place, as well as tackle the social, political and economic structures, practices and systems that support it. The work of organisations like YWCA Canberra are critical in driving this change across Australia.



## WHY A POSITIVE DEFINITION OF CONSENT WILL SUPPORT JUSTICE IN SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

In February this year, Caroline Le Couteur MLA, ACT Greens Member for Murrumbidgee, released a [discussion paper](#) on a proposed legislative change to the Crimes Act 1900 (ACT), to introduce a statutory, positive definition of consent, based on the concept of free and voluntary agreement.

In outlining the significance of the proposal, Ms Le Couteur explained that '[i]n many ways, consent and how it is understood determines the outcome of a sexual assault matter. Not only on a purely legal level, in determining whether the crime happened at all, but on a more conceptual level, in giving the community an understanding of what consent and assault are, and hopefully preventing those cases occurring in the first place...What we need is to reflect on the idea that 'if it's not yes, it's no'. A logical, clear-cut and affirmative definition of consent would paint a well-defined picture about what sexual assault is and is not, and what consent is and is not.'

This notion of 'positive consent' is currently being judicially considered across the country, as the #metoo and #timesup movements shape a new public discourse on what constitutes appropriate sexual behaviour.

Last month, the New South Wales Attorney-General Mark Speakman referred the state's

sexual consent provisions to the NSW Law Reform Commission, following a [Four Corners](#) investigation into a highly controversial sexual assault case that raised deep concerns in the community about how the law interprets consent.

In responding to the ACT Greens discussion paper, YWCA Canberra strongly endorsed the development of a positive definition of consent, in relation to the definition of consent in sexual assault provisions of the Crimes ACT 1900 (ACT).

Our response was informed by a broad range of feminist research, legal reform and policy developments in the context of defining consent, and focused on three key issues:

- the positive definition of consent, defined as a free and voluntary agreement
- how the consent provision could impact on diverse and vulnerable groups of women
- the importance of public education campaigns in supporting legislative changes and to transform the public perception of issues surrounding consent.

This move for legislative change was first proposed in the [Australian Law Reform Commission's 2010 Inquiry, Family Violence – A National Legal Response report](#). At the time of the Inquiry, the

ACT was the only jurisdiction in Australia without a statutory definition of consent based on the concepts of either 'free agreement', 'free and voluntary agreement', or 'consent freely and voluntarily given'. A key recommendation of the Commission's Report was for all jurisdictions to 'include a statutory definition of consent based on the concept of a free and voluntary agreement', which would ensure a nationally consistent definition, provide legal clarity, and set a benchmark for appropriate sexual behaviour.

The inclusion of a positive definition of consent would enable the law in the ACT to set a benchmark of appropriate sexual behaviour, meet the key objectives of sexual assault law, and bring the ACT in line with all other states and territories on this issue. For these reasons, YWCA Canberra supports the proposed inclusion of a positive definition in the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018.

YWCA Canberra's submission recommended that:

- A statutory, positive definition of consent, based on the concept of a free and voluntary agreement, should be enacted in the Crimes Act 1900 (ACT).

“ ... What we need is to reflect on the idea that 'if it's not yes, it's no'. A logical, clear-cut and affirmative definition of consent would paint a well-defined picture about what sexual assault is and is not, and what consent is and is not. ”

- Legislative reform is accompanied by consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, and women with disability to determine the specialist support most appropriate to their needs.

- The ACT government fund the implementation of Respectful

Relationships education for all students from kindergarten to year 12.

- The ACT Government fund and roll-out a public education campaign targeting young people on the definition of consent and the meaning of the '2-year rule'.

## PWC: A CASE STUDY IN EQUITABLE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

YWCA Canberra is proud to have welcomed [PwC Canberra](#) on board this year as a [2018 She Leads Conference](#) Champion. Both YWCA Canberra and PwC Canberra share a demonstrable commitment to workplace gender equality, and through their partnership will be working collaboratively on projects across a range of common interests, including workplace diversity.

PwC Australia is a corporate trailblazer and fellow [Workplace Gender Equality Agency \(WGEA\) Employer of Choice](#) citation holder.

PwC's commitment to gender equality starts at the top. PwC has interventions to disrupt historical gender imbalances and leadership goals for women, including a target for at least 40 per cent of newly admitted partners to be female from 2016-17. It also has a goal of 50 per cent men taking parental leave by 2020 (currently at 33 per cent).

### Gender equality achievements of PwC Australia

- In 2015, PwC was named employer of choice by WGEA and have since retained the certification.
- In 2018:
  - 87 per cent of employees at PwC believe that it is an inclusive workplace environment
  - 83 per cent of employees currently use one

or more flexible work options

- 85 per cent of employees believe PwC is committed to providing equal opportunity for all people
- 45 per cent of all manager promotions were female
- Luke Sayers, the CEO of PwC Australia, is a WGEA pay equity ambassador and member of the national Male Champions of Change group.

### Parental leave and flexible workplace practices promote gender equality

PwC offers all employees 18 weeks paid parental leave that can be taken in a fixed block or flexibly, interspersed with days of work. Equal access to parental leave is one of the most influential measures that companies can take to reduce the gender pay gap between their employees. Research has consistently shown that for women, having children means a substantial wage penalty - sometimes known as the '[Motherhood Penalty](#)'.

Though the reasons for the 'Motherhood Penalty' are multi-faceted, a large contributing factor is the perception that men will continue to work similarly after the birth of their children, whereas women are more likely to drop down to part-time work and take parental leave after becoming a parent.

Offering equal access to paid parental leave for all employees challenges the expectation that only women are carers of children. Giving all new parents the opportunity to take 18 weeks paid parental leave is a huge step towards bridging the gender gap between men and women, both in the workplace and at home.

Julie McKay, PwC's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, said of the policy '[w]e're hoping this change will encourage more dads to act as primary carers in the first 12 months of their child's life'. Ms McKay also noted that the PwC policy challenges gender stereotypes, respects the diversity of families and enables the organisation to support its staff at an important moment in their lives.

PwC also provides flexible working arrangements for all employees, so they can flex how, when and where they work to support their commitments and interests in and outside of work.

## PwC delivers a range of internal programs to promote gender equality. These include:

1. **Open Minds:** A staff training program where employees learn about unconscious bias in relation to gender. The program is based on neuroscience and psychological research and contributes to employees' understanding of how gender stereotyping impacts on their day-to-day work.
2. **Gender IQ e-learn:** Created by UN Women and PwC globally, this short e-learn is a crash course in gender equality.
3. **Symmetry:** Established in 2012, PwC has an employee network for gender diversity called 'Symmetry'. Symmetry provides opportunities for everyone to learn about the importance of gender diversity and prospects for career progression, through events and advocacy to inspire, empower and connect.

The implementation of flexible work, inclusive parental leave and internal gender equality programs and targets at PwC demonstrates that progressive workplace practices have a pivotal role to play in creating more equal workplaces that benefit everyone.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH SHARNA BREMNER, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF END RAPE ON CAMPUS, AUSTRALIA.

End Rape on Campus (EROC) was founded by Sharna Bremner, a long term gender equality advocate. End Rape on Campus (EROC) Australia works to end sexual violence at universities and residential colleges through direct support for survivors and their communities; prevention through education; and policy reform at the campus, state, and federal levels. In February 2018, EROC released *The Red Zone Report* which shed light on the endemic sexual assault and harassment of students at residential colleges around Australia. We caught up with Sharna to find out what drove her to start EROC and become a gender equality advocate, what EROC does for students across Australia and what has happened since the release of *The Red Zone Report*.

### What led you to start EROC?

I was working for an international study abroad company at the time and there were a few international students who disclosed various sexual assaults that had happened to them in their university accommodation. I helped them to report the assaults and was met with appalling reactions from the university and residential personnel - with one even blaming the rape on a 'cultural misunderstanding'. It was so difficult to be taken seriously as a member of staff, I couldn't imagine



how hard it would be as an ordinary student. I knew something had to be changed around university's handling of sexual assault and I thought 'why not me?' That is how End Rape on Campus started.

What has been your favourite part about leading EROC and getting involved in advocacy campaigns to eliminate gender-based violence in Australian universities?

The work is hard and sometimes not pleasant. We are not paid and so the work fits in around our other study and work commitments. But the opportunity to meet amazing student activists from around the country makes it all worthwhile. By far my favourite part is seeing, first hand, how much enthusiasm there is from young people at a grassroots level.

Why do you think advocacy work is integral to affecting social change?

It's the students who are aware of what is happening on the ground and their voices need to be amplified if anything is going to change. The other fantastic thing that you see now is that there are more voices than ever being amplified. The report released by the Human Rights Commission suggests that it's students with disabilities, LGBTI, Aboriginal and students from diverse backgrounds who are most at risk of sexual assault at university - but generally the media largely focuses on the experiences of young white women. However, now I am seeing young advocates more aware of other groups and wanting to elevate their voices as well as their own.

*The Red Zone Report* details the extent of hazing, sexual assault and sexual harassment occurring in residential colleges on university campuses across Australia. How can students and others advocate to universities and governments to ensure that perpetrators are held to account and that such a culture of gender-based violence does not continue?

EROC's focus is on education-based approaches. We fundamentally believe that you can't fix these problems without changing the root cause. That being said, we do help individual victims, but for EROC these are not isolated reports, there is a systemic problem that needs to be addressed. Ultimately, you shouldn't need to have money or lots of lawyers to access your rights - and I believe that it is a right to have an education free from sexual violence.

It's the students who are aware of what is happening on the ground and their voices need to be amplified if anything is going to change. The other fantastic thing that you see now is that there are more voices than ever being amplified.

One of the biggest issues I have faced, particularly in residential colleges, is the secrecy involved in their practices and traditions. It often means that college students find it hard to speak out to the wider university community, or worse, that they simply accept that hazing and sexual harassment and assault at college is just 'normal'. I think one

of the most important things students and non-students can do is speak out against this issue and call out the organisations that are failing to protect students from sexual violence.

What have been government and university responses to the recommendations of *The Red Zone Report*? Are you hopeful for positive change in the future?

The response from universities and residential colleges has been varied. Some will flat out deny that it's a problem, others will say that these issues are 'in the past' or 'historic issues'. Even St Mark's College at the University of Adelaide, where reports of disturbing hazing and sexual assault rituals were announced on *60 Minutes*, denied that any problem existed in their college following the release of their report. On the other hand, there have been some institutions who have responded more positively.

In terms of governmental response, EROC has been in talks with the Minister for Education, Simon Birmingham, and Shadow Education Minister, Tanya Plibersek. We have expressed the need for a national taskforce to oversee the implementation of best practices around sexual violence prevention, at all universities and residential colleges across the country. Discussions are still ongoing but we are hoping for positive change.

If you were to give advice to young women interested in getting involved in grassroots activism or advocacy work, what would it be?

Do it. It's hard and the change won't come quickly, but standing up for your rights and the rights of others is so important, especially now with everything going on in the world. In my experience, grassroots activism and advocacy is so rewarding, it's the most valuable thing you can do with your time.

## YWCA CANBERRA'S HOSTS FIRST ADVOCACY BRIEFING

In May, YWCA Canberra hosted its first advocacy briefing for members and supporters interested in becoming engaged in [our advocacy work](#). At the event, we launched our first [Advocacy Toolkit](#), developed to equip girls and women with the knowledge and skills to advocate on gender equality issues.

A range of local women attended the event – some seasoned advocates, others new to advocacy and wanting to find out more about how to get involved.

As guest speakers Hannah Gissane and Amy Blain noted during the event, advocacy can be focused on large or small issues. Actions could range from changing gendered pronouns in documentation, enabling girls to wear shorts and pants at school (as per the Girls Uniform Agenda advocacy platform) to making changes in your own school or community to progress gender equality. Both also spoke about the importance of celebrating wins along the way, in recognition that social change takes time.

Another issue discussed during our advocacy briefing was the importance of collective action to facilitate social change. History is full of examples of grassroots action which have contributed to the realisation of social change. For example, the success of the women's liberation movement was not a result of one and two advocacy actions but a result of the actions of thousands of women who fought for those rights. Closer to home, the success of the marriage

equality campaign here in the ACT depended on thousands of advocates and campaigners who took to the streets to stand up for human rights.

While leaders are critical to galvanising support, it is the many committed advocates who contribute to raising awareness of social justice issues and how they impact our everyday lives that is the critical success factor.

YWCA Canberra's Director of Communication, Advocacy and Fundraising, Helen Machalias spoke about the importance of timing in the policy and political cycle, highlighting where particular actions, such as calling a politician's office, would have the most impact.

Helen also noted that the toolkit had been designed to strike a balance between giving members an evidence base and recommendations, while avoiding an overly prescriptive approach in recognition that the most powerful advocacy actions are often based on people sharing what these issues mean to them personally.

If you would like to get involved in YWCA Canberra's work to progress gender equality in the ACT and internationally, check out our [Leading the Change Report](#) to find out more about the issues we're championing and use our advocacy toolkit to play your part.

## EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Capital Giving Grant Opportunity

[Capital Giving](#) are inviting applications for a grant up to \$6500. Their key area of focus is the advancement of opportunities for ACT Region Women and Girls. Please email [lesley@capitalgiving.org](mailto:lesley@capitalgiving.org) for information on the application process. **Applications open Wednesday 4 July, and close Wednesday 25 July.**

### National Council of Women ACT Seminar

The National Council of Women ACT will be holding a seminar on 'Canberra - A livable city for whom?' on **Wednesday 18 July 2018 from 9:30am to 4:00pm at the Canberra Southern Cross Club, Corinna Street, Woden ACT. General admission \$50, Students \$30, for more info contact: Helen Raymond on (02) 6286 7373 or [oraymo1@gmail.com](mailto:oraymo1@gmail.com).**

### YWCA Canberra She Leads Conference and Networking Event

Our annual [She Leads Conference](#) will be held on

**1 August at the Rex Hotel Canberra. We will be holding a [Networking and Cocktail event the night before \(31 July\)](#).**

### She Leads Workshop: Board Governance

[The Governance Workshop](#) provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of board and committee members, different governance models, how boards operate, and an outline of the legal responsibilities of board and committee members. **7 August, 5:30pm - 8:30pm, Level 3 Training Rooms, 71 Northbourne Ave, Canberra.**

### She Leads In-Conversation with Michelle Law

The August [She Leads In-Conversation](#) will centre around finding your voice and how to trust it, practical ways to stay focused on your work and career, intersectional feminism, and the struggles women of colour face in leadership position. **14 August, 6:15pm - 8:15pm at the Ann Harding Centre, University of Canberra.**

## CONTACT

HELEN MACHALIAS

Director of Communication, Advocacy and Fundraising Team

Email: [helen.machalias@ywca-canberra.org.au](mailto:helen.machalias@ywca-canberra.org.au)



Facebook.com/YWCACanberra



@YWCACanberra



au.linkedin.com/company/ywca-of-canberra



@ywcacanberra

[www.ywca-canberra.org.au](http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au)