

# Victorian Higher Education Summit

## Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response

### Event Summary

#### Event Details

Victorian Higher Education Summit on Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response

- Thursday 13 February 2025 and Friday 14 February 2025
- Monash College, 750 Collins St, Docklands, Victoria, 3008

#### Event Objective

The Victorian Higher Education Summit on the Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence ('The Summit') aimed to facilitate opportunities for university leaders, subject matter experts, prevention practitioners, students and victim-survivors to:

- Showcase the strong commitment from the Victorian sector in relation to the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence;
- Reflect on best practice and promoting collaboration within the sector; and
- Create a space for the Victorian sector to come up with new and innovative approaches to complex challenges in prevention and response.

The first day of the summit focused on knowledge-building within the sector, while the second day focused on collaboration and collective action, where attendees were asked to engage in a process of co-design, together.

---



## **Keynote Address: Maria Dimopoulos AM**

Responding to victim-survivor disclosures in higher education, in culturally-sensitive ways

### **Key message and themes**

Maria sought to re-orientate the participants away from culturally-sensitive practice and towards cultural humility within responding to disclosures. This was understood as the practice of critical self-reflection, self-awareness and openness to learning from those with lived expertise, alongside the commitment to reflexive practice whereby one suspends their assumptions, recognises their biases, and examines power dynamics in disclosure processes. Combined with critical understandings of the importance of language and its connection to culture, power and trauma, Maria also detailed the structural barriers that influence a victim-survivor's decision to disclose.

Decentering Western notions of help-seeking and health was identified as a valuable role in creating trust, safety and relational accountability. Maria shared that whilst Western frameworks of individual disclosures, professional counselling and criminal justice interventions are valuable and useful tools; a broader, intersectional, understanding ought to support alternative pathways to recovery such as peer and family-based support, as well as faith-based or community-led practices. These collectivist practices promote group success, consensus and ownership: a form of interdependence that can be valuable in establishing trust and safety within disclosures.

Institutional change and structural accountability were also discussed briefly by Maria. While at an individual level, culturally humble practices are necessary, Maria also encouraged whole-of-institution approaches to be taken when implementing cultural humility.

### **Actionable practices**

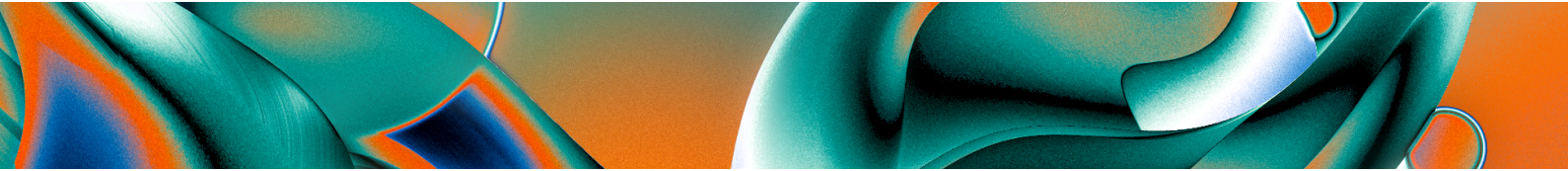
- Reflect on one's own positionality and responsibilities in creating safer spaces for disclosures.
- Provide anti-racism and intersectionality training to staff who handle disclosures.
- Employ critical reflexivity to assess how institutional policies may inadvertently re-enforce exclusion or harm.

---

## **Keynote Address: Rosie Batty AO**

### **Key message and themes**

Rosie Batty AO opened the second day of the Summit by sharing her experiences of family violence, as well as her work in pushing legal and institutional change. Rosie also discussed her experiences speaking to large corporations and aiding them in developing corporate action plans to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in professional contexts.



Having operated within the public spheres for over a decade, Rosie emphasised the importance of providing emotional, logistical and professional support to one another as changemakers. Rosie recognised that one's mental and physical capacities are dynamic, and reminded audience members of the importance of leaning on their peers to help enable prolonged, sustainable work.

In sharing her personal journey, Rosie also discussed the importance of involving young men and boys in conversations about gender-based violence; including initiatives that focussed on masculinities.

Rosie finally discussed the value of trauma-informed practice within gender-based violence prevention and response spaces, speaking to how and when a victim-survivor chooses to share their stories, noting the importance of giving appropriate weight to the expertise held by those with lived experience.

---

### **Plenary Panel: The intersection of gender-based violence and racism**

- Prof Kyllie Cripps (Monash University)
- Dr Amar Freya (Independent Expert and Survivor-Advocate)
- Delaram Ansari (Multicultural Centre for Women's Health)

#### **Key messages:**

Facilitated by Monash University's Prof. Kate Fitzgibbon; Kyllie, Amar and Delaram discussed the importance of diversifying knowledge in gender-based violence prevention and response. Building on Maria Dimopoulos' keynote, the panel discussed decolonial and intersectional understandings of what drives gender-based violence, and encouraged the higher-education sector to work with Indigenous and multicultural communities in meaningful and reciprocal ways, to enhance sector-approaches to prevention and response. Some of the main ways they suggested doing so, was by investing the time in listening to these communities and working in solidarity to apply their knowledges more broadly.

All panellists reflected on the important role of co-design in developing prevention and response interventions, when working with Indigenous, migrant and racially under-recognised communities. In particular, they discussed *how* and *why* it was necessary to engage those with lived expertise and experience, in culturally humble and reflective ways, while also broadly recognising the different and multiple ways people understand gender-based violence.

#### **Resources shared:**

- Engaging men and boys from migrant and faith-based communities in primary prevention: <https://www.mcwh.com.au/engaging-men-from-multicultural-and-faith-based-communities-in-primary-prevention/>
- Making the Links: A Guide to Working with Migrant and Refugee Communities in Primary Prevention and Early Intervention: <https://www.mcwh.com.au/making-the-links-a-guide-to-working-with-migrant-and-refugee-communities-in-primary-prevention-and-early-intervention/>



### **Panel discussion: Bridging frameworks and practice in masculinities work**

- Thanura Ediri (Deakin University)
- Siobhan Hardiman (Monash University)
- Dr Shane Tas (Our Watch)

#### **Key messages:**

Facilitated by Monash University's Bailey Webb, Thanura, Siobhan and Shane discussed the role higher education can play in supporting men and boys to develop healthier, more diverse masculinities, as well as positive male peer relationships. The purpose of this workshop was to develop an appreciation of the importance of targeted interventions focussed on men, boys and masculinities in prevention programming in higher education.

In discussing ideas of intersectionality and accountability, the panellists spoke to the value of diversity within hiring practices and the connection this has with transparent, equitable program design and program-based discussions on power. Panelists also spoke on the importance of long-term, sustainable planning and how actions to combat gender-based violence don't end in workshop spaces, but should be woven into students' learning curriculums. In doing so, enabling further opportunities to develop knowledge and community.

Gender-transformative practices, strength-based approaches towards engagement, whole-of-university approaches, and navigating backlash to change were also discussed.

#### **Actionable takeaways:**

- Trauma-informed, culturally sensitive and context-specific engagement with men in the developmental and role-out programs targeting masculinities is critical. This aids in understanding what a 'safer space' can mean for men and how barriers to design and delivery can be overcome.
- Acknowledging existing levels of knowledge and lived experience allows you to meet a man where he is at, thereby preventing alienation and inviting vulnerability and collaboration.

---

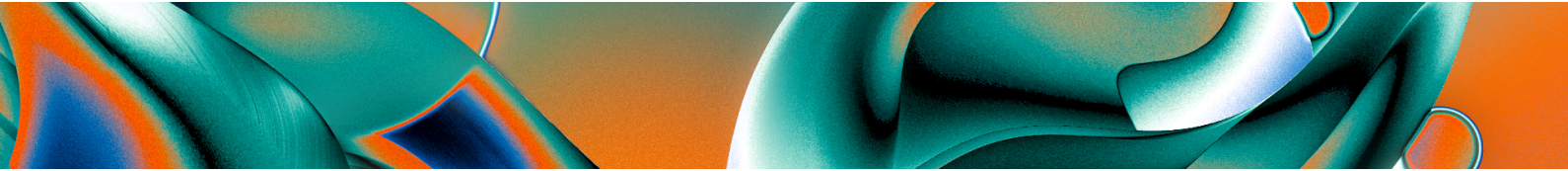
### **Panel discussion: Exploring perpetrator disclosures and programming in higher education**

- Dr Elli Darwinkel (Monash University)
- Ryan Hsu (Monash University)
- Dr Annabel Chan (Right in the Head)

#### **Key messages:**

Facilitated by Monash University's Jayde de Bondt, Elli, Ryan and Annabel shared their expertise on safer practices in responding to perpetrator disclosures. The panellists spoke on the importance of early intervention and response/support programs, including the differing understandings of safer practice in responding to perpetrator disclosures. They also spoke to the types of interventions that can be taken to reduce the possibility of perpetration within higher risk demographics and the factors at play when planning, developing and implementing early intervention programming in higher education settings.

The panellists also explored the ways that popular language used to refer to respondents and their actions, terming them as "monsters" has historically alienated them and acted as a push factor towards



men's rights groups. In response, the panellists challenged the myth that respondents are always “monsters” and shared their expertise on the importance of avoiding further guilt and shame within the respondent, as an important step in preventing further anti-social behaviour.

Panelists also discussed the importance of respondent input and collaboration in designing their support/treatment plans post-incident investigation. This applied across a number of dimensions including social domains, attitudes and beliefs, skill development and cognitive processing.

**Actionable takeaways:**

- Utilise humanising and person-centric language when talking to, and discussing, a respondent and their actions to avoid alienation and re-offending.
- Acknowledge that respondents are often disempowered during investigations, and where appropriate, to collaborate with them in the design of their support/treatment plans.

---

**Panel Discussion: Working alongside victim-survivors in prevention and response**

- Dr Natalia Antolak-Saper (Monash University)
- Dr Revathi Nugehalli Krishna (Monash University)
- Dr Jess Ison (La Trobe University)

**Key messages:**

Facilitated by Monash University' Fiona Marshal, Natalia, Revathi and Jess discussed the evolving ways that higher education providers work alongside victim-survivors in prevention and response. The discussions centered on the value of meaningful and respectful engagement with victim-survivors in prevention and response initiatives, noting examples of existing interventions and current research. The panellists also spoke to specific considerations in planning and developing prevention and response programs and meaningful involvement of victim survivors in person-centered and co-design methodologies.

---

**Monash University XYX Lab Hackathon: Exploring challenges and solutions to gender based violence prevention in high education**

- Prof. Nicole Kalms
- Prof. Gene Bawden
- A/Prof. Jess Berry

Please refer to the summary/findings report: [PGVB\\_workshop\\_outcomes.pdf](#)

