Translating student narratives to inform service innovation: How moving towards restorative approaches has been influenced by our students.
Dr Elli Darwinkel & Belinda Gibson, La Trobe University

The La Trobe Speak Up Program aligns itself with Safer Community Programs in other Australian Universities by providing a service for students and staff to raise concerns about behavioural risks. Historically these concerns are managed using a discipline focussed or punitive approach, such as General Misconduct processes. In managing these concerns, we identified a potential area to improve our service provision. The student narrative assisted in demonstrating that resolution through General Misconduct processes may not be appropriate or result in positive and educative outcomes. Speak Up sought to develop and implement a Restorative Justice Program to improve the student experience and contribute to students feeling and being safer in this environment. The primary objective of the program is to reduce recidivism by building the respondents awareness of how their behaviour impacts others. This presentation will use case examples to discuss the student experience of General Misconduct versus Restorative Justice processes, and outline the La Trobe Speak Up team’s Restorative Justice framework.

Learning outcomes
- Participants who attend this session will gain a greater understanding of restorative programs, what they are, how they work and the positive impact they can have on the broader university community.
- The session will also equip participants with an understanding of the restorative framework that La Trobe University use and how the shift from punitive to restorative programs has impacted the outcomes achieved by the Speak Up team.

Presenters
Dr Elli Darwinkel, La Trobe University

Dr Elli Darwinkel has a PhD in the field of Forensic Psychology, specialising in investigative interviews of sexual assault and child abuse. She established the Safer Community program for campus threat management at Victoria University. Dr Darwinkel is experienced in responding to and managing complex cases relating to problem behaviours. She has previously worked as a trainer in investigative interviewing, as well as a lecturer and a researcher in Psychology, most notably completing research for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. She is currently working on research examining campus threat assessment and management in Victorian Universities.

Belinda Gibson, La Trobe University

Belinda Gibson is a Psychologist who has worked in the forensic, private, community and tertiary sector for over 10 years. Belinda’s experience with Western Australia Corrective Services and Corrections Victoria was in the context of providing treatment to offenders directly in a one-to-one capacity and in group settings. Belinda has also been responsible for conducting offender assessments and providing reports to the Victorian Adult Parole Board. Belinda has a private practice in the western suburbs of Melbourne and has been a part of the Speak Up team at La Trobe University for the past 11 months. Belinda is currently working on developing a restorative program for La Trobe University.