BRIGHTening our community: changing the gender narrative to prevent violence
Fiona Marshall & Amy Dempsey, Monash University

This presentation will explore Monash’s development of a peer-facilitated training to flip the gender scripts, leading the way to a new narrative of respectful relationships and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) on-campus.

The BRIGHT program was created to engage students in a conversation about gender inequality as a driver of GBV. BRIGHT aims to have students arrive at a point where they feel empowered to make change within their community.

Utilising student facilitators has been crucial to the program’s success, allowing peers to guide the changing narrative around GBV and gender inequality within their own smaller clubs, societies and sub-communities.

A challenge encountered in rolling out BRIGHT has been getting students to dedicate significant time to a non-academic program. We have worked with different student allies to expand the program year on year. In 2019 we saw a record number of Monash Student Association representatives undertake BRIGHT and share within their networks. This year we have also partnered with faculties to integrate the program into coursework.

With over 1000 students completing BRIGHT since its introduction, 95% of the students reported that they felt better equipped to change their club or groups culture around gender, 97% felt better prepared to be an active bystander if they witnessed GBV, and 98% felt better equipped to respond to a disclosure and outline support services.

The BRIGHT program is a successful example of a prevention program created by students for students where they leave empowered to change the story around gender and violence.

**Learning outcomes**

- Employing primary prevention research to the university setting. Participants will understand the steps taken to embed a national best-practice framework for primary prevention (Our Watch Change the Story) into a training program that responds to the nuances of GBV prevention and gender equality post-secondary education.
- Effective methods of equipping students with skills to ‘pay it forward’. Participants will understand the process of involving students at all stages of development to meet the needs of our diverse community, as well as the benefits of peer facilitation to guide shifting narratives around GBV. By doing this, we give students specific skills to drive cultural change in their own sub-communities.
- Expanding a program from the ground up with allies. Participants will understand the unique strategies for expanding uptake of a non-academic program in a post-secondary education institution. Strategies include embedding training in student leader orientations and within academic coursework.
Presenters
Fiona Marshall, Monash University

Fiona commenced working with Monash’s Campus Community Division in March 2017, driving prevention and awareness raising efforts under the Respect.Now.Always. Campaign and helping to forge the development of the Respectful Communities team.

Having been a member of the Monash community for more than 8 years as a student and staff member, Fiona has seen a great shift in how Universities respond to and educate on gender-based violence. However, she recognises there is still a great more to be done.

With extensive experience working in higher education, Fiona also has a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts from Monash. A great deal of her studies focused on human rights law and gender equity, undertaking a volunteer internship during her studies with the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law. Fiona currently volunteers her time sitting on the City of Monash’s Gender Equity Advisory Committee.

Amy Dempsey, Monash University

Amy is currently completing her final year of her Bachelor of Primary Education (Honours)/Bachelor of Arts degree at Monash. Amy has a passion for promoting respectful relationships in order to prevent GBV, with a particular focus on primary and tertiary education. For her honours year research, Amy is exploring Primary Teachers perceptions and implementation of Respectful Relationships Education.

As a student who has lived and worked within Monash Residential Services since 2016, Amy has enjoyed taking an active role in progressing cultural change around prevention and response to GBV on-campus.

Amy joined Respectful Communities in 2018 as a Training Officer, and is one of the eight peer-facilitators of BRIGHT training. In February 2019, Amy was invited to speak alongside our Vice Chancellor and the Chair of Our Watch at the launch of the Respect and Equality Program.