



# Translating student narratives to inform service innovation: How moving towards restorative approaches has been influenced by our students.

Belinda Gibson & Elli Darwinkel

December 2019

# Session outline

- About Speak Up at La Trobe
- Management and resolution of student behavioural concerns
  - General Misconduct process
  - Student experience
  - Case examples
- Restorative justice framework
  - Student experience
  - Case examples

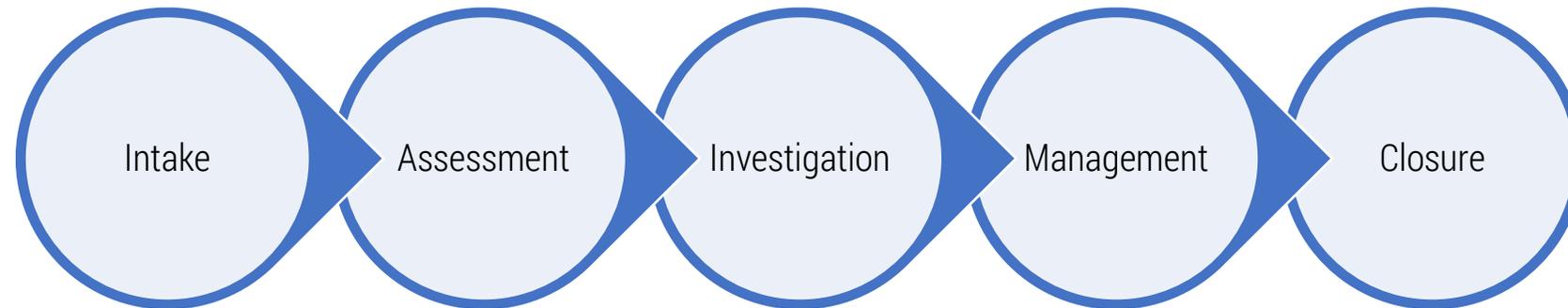
# Speak Up Service

“Safer Community” model - Victorian Universities

- Centralised reporting and management of student mental health, welfare and behavioural concerns including bullying, harassment, discrimination, stalking, sexual harm and family violence
  - Reports made by staff about student behaviour
  - Students can make reports about any behavioural concerns (incl. external to the University, historical)
- Development and delivery of educational resources and workshops relating to student mental health, welfare and behavioural concerns

# Case management and resolution

- All reports of behavioural concerns progress through a case management process



# Case management and resolution

## Informal / local level resolution

- Advice for self-management
  - Skill development,
  - Safety planning
- Conversation with respondent
  - Educative focus
  - Informal warning
  - Reasonable direction, e.g. temporary suspension or no contact order
- Referrals for support

## General misconduct

- Investigation
  - Interview all relevant parties
  - Gather other relevant information
- Report to GM officer
- GM officer hearing
  - Meeting with respondent
- GM decision
  - Balance of probabilities
  - Sanctions up to exclusion

# The student experience – In General Misconduct

- Feedback on the student experience with General Misconduct
  - Length of time associated with the investigation and then in obtaining an outcome was unsatisfactory.
  - Lack of communication throughout the investigation.
  - When an outcome was delivered students reported/expressed their disappointment with it.
- People who experience sexual violence typically feel a profound loss of control over their lives, when it is perceived that the outcome of their report does not reflect their experience it can impede the person's healing process and can result in maladaptive beliefs about oneself or others (Frazier, Mortensen, & Steward, 2005; Littleton & Breitkopf, 2006; Steel, Sanna, Hanna, Whipple, & Cross, 2004).

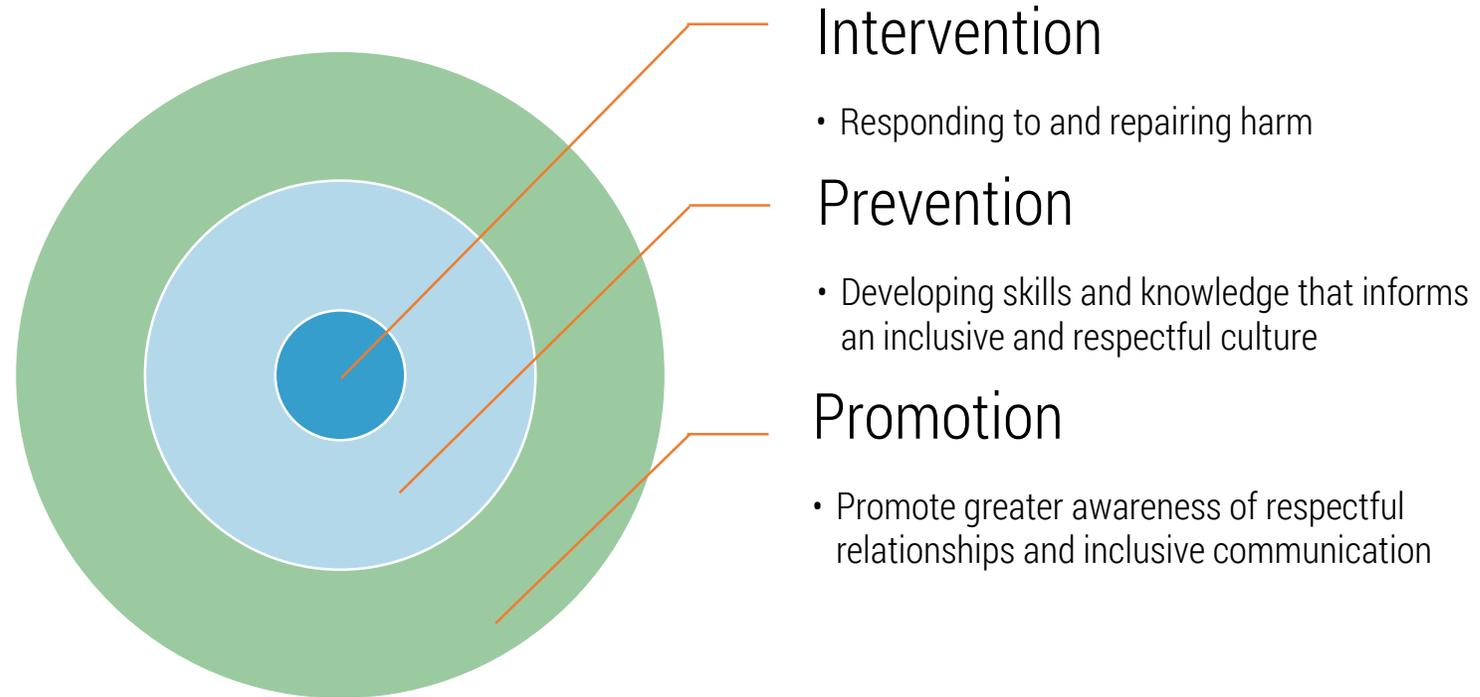
# The student experience - When General Misconduct isn't appropriate.

- Male residential student disclosed two instances of sexual assault whilst intoxicated by female residential student
  - Female student was already known to the service as previous victim-survivor of sexual assault
  - Both students have experienced mental health concerns (including depression and suicidality)
  - Prior to SA the students had been friends, after the incidents occurred but prior to the disclosure both had agreed to be polite acquaintances
- Male student requests an educational conversation with the female about alcohol and consent
- Outcome: case didn't fit Misconduct and without having alternative options we risked the student disengaging from our service completely and or potentially causing further harm.

# Restorative Justice

- Restorative Justice Program development commences.
  - Start by researching restorative programs and exploring how we could adapt our service to include restorative justice offerings.
  - Began by offering facilitated conversations (when and only if appropriate) to students.
    - Obtained verbal feedback from students after they engaged in facilitated conversations, which to date has been only positive and further encourages our commitment to develop a framework for a Restorative Justice program.

# Framework for Restorative Justice



# Restorative Justice: Promotion

- Campaigns, programs and communication related to respect:
  - 16 Days of Activism
  - International Women's Day

# Restorative Justice: Prevention

- Ongoing workshops and training for staff, student leaders and student groups:
  - Bystander action
  - Respectful relationships
  - Reflective practice groups
  - EAAA program

# Restorative Justice: Intervention

- Restorative programs and workshops
  - Example topics: Victim empathy, defusing conflict, consequential thinking, what is violence.
- Facilitated conversations to resolve complaints and concerns
- Misconduct outcomes with an educative focus

# The student experience – In Restorative Justice

- A student reported being harassed by another student known to them.
  - Both students had previously been friends but had a falling out.
  - Since this time they had agreed to have no contact.
  - During a festival, the student who presented to Speak Up reported that the other student had run up to them, thrown colour powder at their face and screamed at them.
  - The student who presented requested that ‘something’ be done.
- The two students were offered a facilitated conversation where they would agree about what future contact might look like.
- Outcome: both students attended the facilitated conversation, a no contact order was agreed upon. Feedback post conversation was extremely positive with both parties thanking the service.

# Case management and resolution

## Informal / local level resolution

- Advice for self-management
  - Skill development, e.g. boundary setting
  - Safety planning
- Conversation with respondent
  - Educative focus
  - Informal warning
  - Reasonable direction, e.g. temporary suspension or no contact order
- Referrals for support

## General misconduct

- Investigation
  - Interview all relevant parties
  - Gather other relevant information
- Report to GM officer
- GM officer hearing
  - Meeting with respondent
- GM decisions
  - Balance of probabilities
  - Sanctions up to exclusion
- Misconduct outcomes with an educative focus

## Restorative Justice

- Restorative programs and workshops
  - Example topics: Victim empathy, defusing conflict, consequential thinking, what is violence.
- Facilitated conversations to resolve complaints and concerns

# Contact

## **Elli Darwinkel**

Manager, Speak Up, La Trobe University

P: +61 39479 5508

[E.Darwinkel@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:E.Darwinkel@latrobe.edu.au)

## **Belinda Gibson**

Senior Coordinator, Speak Up, La Trobe University

P: +61 39479 5243

[B.Gibson@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:B.Gibson@latrobe.edu.au)



**Thank you**

[latrobe.edu.au](http://latrobe.edu.au)