

Submission to the VLRC: Improving the Response of the Justice System to Sexual Offences

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Report to charge: Alternative reporting options can fulfil criminal justice and survivors' needs

This submission outlines the arguments and evidence in support of alternative avenues for reporting sexual harm. In particular, we outline the criminal justice and therapeutic potential for anonymous reporting. Sexual Assault Report Anonymously (SARA) was an alternative and anonymous reporting tool administered through South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) in Victoria, Australia between 2013-2020. We provide a brief overview of the literature and history of alternative reporting options in Australia, and in doing so provide an overview of findings of an analysis of the SARA tool, highlighting the features that exemplify best practice in anonymous and alternative reporting for victim-survivors.

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Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. For further information, contact Associate Professor Georgina Heydon: georgina.heydon@rmit.edu.au.

The context for reporting sexual assault

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are the most underreported crimes worldwide, with an estimated 80-90% of sexual assaults going unreported annually.¹ There are multiple factors that contribute to the underreporting of sexual violence, including:

- Factors that dissuade survivors to formally report rape to the police:
 - Poor police interviewing practices, as well as problematic police attitudes.²
 - The influence of rape culture undermines, belittles or otherwise fails to take seriously individuals who report experiences of rape.³
- The criminal justice process, notably investigation and trial:
 - Research indicates that the secondary trauma and victimisation that occurs during cross-examination (or simply the fear of being cross-examined) contributes to some survivors withdrawing their claims.⁴
 - Research also indicates that some survivors may not perceive their experience as “rape” or “sexual assault” or may consider it to be too trivial and are therefore

¹ Daly, K., & Bouhours, B. 2010. “Rape and attrition in the legal process: A comparative analysis of five countries”, *Crime and Justice*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 565–650; Rotenberg, C. 2017. “Police-reported sexual assaults in Canada, 2009 to 2014: A statistical profile”, *Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*, vol. 1, pp. 3-29.

² Jordan, J. 2004. “Beyond belief? Police, rape and women’s credibility”, *Criminal Justice*, 4(1), 29–59; Campbell, R. 2005. “What really happened? A validation study of rape survivors’ help-seeking experiences with the legal and medical systems”, *Violence and Victims*, vol. 20, pp. 55-68; McMillan, L., & Thomas, M. 2009. “Police interviews of rape victims: Tensions and contradictions”, in M. Horvath & J. Brown (eds.). *Rape: Challenging contemporary thinking* (pp. 255-280). London: Routledge.

³ Campbell, R. 2006. “Rape survivors’ experiences with the legal and medical systems: Do rape victim advocates make a difference?”, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 30–45; Rich, K. 2014. *Interviewing rape victims: Practice and policy issues in an international context*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴ Rich, K. 2014. *Interviewing rape victims: Practice and policy issues in an international context*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Jordan, J. 2008. “Perfect victims, perfect policing?: Improving rape complainants experiences of police investigations”, *Public Administration*, vol. 86, pp. 699–719.

reluctant to report out of fear they might be wasting police time.⁵ This is especially so when survivors feel their experience might not “fit” within normative assumptions about rape, specifically non-violent assaults.⁶

The challenges that are associated with institutional responses to survivors of sexual assault who make formal reports exist within a broader socio-political and cultural context that disbelieves, undermines or blames survivors. This contributes to the “justice gap”; a gap that exists between the instances of sexual assault recorded by police and the number of convictions that are achieved.⁷ This gap, along with additional challenges that survivors face as they move through the criminal justice system, leads to the perception that these systems are limited in their ability to provide justice, and the view that alternatives to these systems are necessary.

Increased desire for reporting sexual assault

Recent research has highlighted an array of alternative options for speaking out and having experiences of sexual violence heard, many of which are facilitated through digital platforms:

- Informal avenues to reporting/speaking out:
 - Survivors are increasingly turning to alternative avenues for speaking out, such as digital spaces and social media, spurred on (in part) by the #MeToo movement.⁸

⁵ Weiss, K. 2010. “Too ashamed to report: Deconstructing the shame of sexual victimisation”, *Feminist Criminology*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 275-298; Weiss, K. 2011. “Neutralising sexual victimisation: A typology of victims’ non-reporting accounts”, *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 445-467.

⁶ Du Mont, J., Miller, K., & Myhr, T., 2003. “The role of ‘real rape’ and ‘real victim’ stereotypes in the police reporting practices of sexually assaulted women”, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 466-486.

⁷ Temkin, J., & Krahé, B. 2008. *Sexual assault and the justice gap: A question of attitude*. Oxford & Portland, Or: Hart Publishing.

⁸ Fileborn, B., & Loney-Howes, R. (2020). Using Social Media to Resist Gender Violence: A Global Perspective. In E. Erez & P. Ibarra (Eds.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of International Criminology*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Online support communities have long-existed as informal, peer-led spaces of informal reporting.⁹
- Mapping tools and apps enable survivors to report locations where sexual harassment or violence has occurred.¹⁰

In some cases, disclosing experiences of sexual violence online or through other informal means may expose survivors to allegations of defamation (which can result in survivors or journalists being sued for damages).¹¹ Yet the significant uptake of digital platforms by survivors for speaking out about sexual violence is nonetheless indicative of the desire expressed by survivors to be *heard*, have their experiences *validated*, and seek out a supportive community.¹² Moreover, the technosocial nature of digital technologies now embedded in our every-day lives illuminates the potential for support services and policing to engage with and develop effective digital tools to facilitate opportunities for the informal, confidential and (if desired) anonymous reporting of sexual assault.

⁹ Burrows, A. 2011. *Online peer support for survivors of sexual assault*. See: <https://www.secasa.com.au/assets/Documents/online-peer-support-for-survivors-of-sexual-assault.pdf>; O'Neill, T. 2018. "'Today I speak': Exploring how victim-survivors use Reddit", *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 44–59; Noack-Lundberg, K., Liangputtong, P., Marjadi, B., Ussher, J., Perz, J., Schmied, V., Dune, T., & Brook, E. 2019. "Sexual violence and safety: The narratives of transwomen in online forums", *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, pp. 1–14.

¹⁰ Fileborn, B. 2014. "Online activism and street harassment: Digital justice or shouting into the ether?" *Griffith Journal of Law & Human Dignity*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 32–51; Fileborn, B. 2017. "Justice 2.0: Street harassment victims' use of social media and online activism as sites of informal justice", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 57, no. 6, pp. 1482–1501.

¹¹ Jane, E. A. 2016. *Misogyny online: A short (and brutish) history*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd; Salter, M. 2013. "Justice and revenge in online counter-publics: Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media", *Crime, Media, Culture*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 225–242; Fileborn, B. 2014. "Online activism and street harassment: Digital justice or shouting into the ether?" *Griffith Journal of Law & Human Dignity*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 32–51.

¹² Fileborn, B. 2014. "Online activism and street harassment: Digital justice or shouting into the ether?" *Griffith Journal of Law & Human Dignity*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 32–51; Fileborn, B. 2017. "Justice 2.0: Street harassment victims' use of social media and online activism as sites of informal justice", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 57, no. 6, pp. 1482–1501; Fileborn, B., & Loney-Howes, R. 2020. "Using social media to resist gender violence—A global perspective", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*; Loney-Howes, R. 2020. *Online anti-rape activism: Exploring the politics of the personal in the age of digital media*. Emerald Group Publishing; O'Neill, T. 2018. "'Today I speak': Exploring how victim-survivors use Reddit", *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 44–59; Powell, A. 2015. "Seeking rape justice: Formal and informal responses to sexual violence through technosocial counter-publics", *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 571–588; Salter, M. 2013. "Justice and revenge in online counter-publics: Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media", *Crime, Media, Culture*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 225–242.

Current alternative informal reporting options in Australia

There has been an increase in the development and use of anonymous and confidential sexual assault reporting options in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. These include:

- Anonymous and confidential reporting through police:
 - In Australia, there are three jurisdictions that offer anonymous reporting of sexual assault: the Alternative Reporting Option (or ARO) used by Queensland Police, Sexual Assault Reporting Option (or SARO) in use with New South Wales Police, and ACT police have an online form for reporting historic sexual assault.
- Anonymous and confidential reporting through support services:
 - The organisation Bravehearts administers a “Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme” for adult survivors of child sexual abuse to informally report, which is shared with police (<https://bravehearts.org.au/SADS>).
 - In Victoria, the Sexual Assault Reporting Anonymously (SARA) web-based tool was developed in 2013 by the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) located in south-eastern Melbourne and was decommissioned in 2020. Reports made to SARA were deidentified and shared with police.

These anonymous reporting options typically take the form of self-administered questionnaire that can be filled out at any time after a crime has occurred to be directly handed to, emailed or posted back to police. The questions asked in the SARO, ARO and informal ACT reporting option are not survivor-centric; the forms are lengthy, and personal communications with support services in these jurisdictions suggest that survivors are reluctant to use them because of the nature of the questions asked. For example, the SARO reporting option from NSW is 14 pages long and contains a range of invasive (and potentially traumatising) questions (63 in total) about the offence, offender and survivor.

Alternative reporting options administered by a support service: SARA case study

In comparison to alternative reporting options offered by police, the purpose and design of SARA in Victoria was to provide survivors with the opportunity to report their experience, be heard, access services and prevent further harm to others in an informal capacity. Specifically, the reporting tool sought to centre their voices and respected their framing of events, in addition to providing deidentified reports to relevant policing jurisdictions by SECASA. However, its primary purpose was to connect survivors with support services.

Given the popularity and design of SARA, we advocate that collaboratively developed alternative reporting tools based on best-practice interviewing techniques may assist police, support services and victim-survivors in fulfilling the different needs of stakeholders.¹³ Specifically, we advocate for the use of alternative written reporting options (including digital platforms) that are informed by interviewing techniques, such as the “whole story” approach,¹⁴ because of the way it privileges the survivor’s own narrative and version of events.

SARA was structured around 21 questions that included a number of free textboxes that sought to shift the focus away from the victim-survivor’s behavior and avoid soliciting specific and minute details about their experience. Instead, the questions were focused on capturing information specifically about the assault and offender. The use of free textboxes is significant, as open-ended or “free text” boxes provide individuals with an opportunity to clarify “what really happened” rather than just responding to “yes”, “no” or other pre-determined questions.¹⁵ The

¹³ Heydon, G., & Powell, A. 2018. “Written-response interview protocols: An innovative approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault allegations”, *Policing and Society*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 631-646.

¹⁴ Tidmarsh, P., Powell, M., & Darwinkle, E. 2012. “‘Whole story’: A new framework for conducting investigative interviews about sexual assault”, *Journal of Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice*, vol. 4, pp. 33-44. See also: Hope, J., Gabbert, F., Heaton-Armstrong, A., & Wolchover, D. 2013. “Self-administered witness interview”, *Criminal Law and Justice Weekly*, vol. 177, no. 4.

¹⁵ Ellonen, N., Fagerlund, M., & Pösö, T. 2018. “Free-text comments as a tool for developing the self-report method: Parents’ responses to a survey on violence against children”, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 58-75.

free text boxes were designed to enable survivors to tell SECASA “what happened” in their own words. Reporters were also given the opportunity to fill in a free text box with any additional “offender description” information. In the context of sexual assault, this helps to avoid asking questions about definitions of sexual assault that are based on stereotypes about survivors and offenders or emphasis legalistic/criminal language that survivors may not feel their experiences reflect.¹⁶ All questions in the survey were optional to respond to with the exception of the question about the type of incident they are reporting. This question contained a list of pre-determined responses to be selected from a drop-down list containing the following options: rape/sexual assault”, “childhood sexual assault”, “indecent exposure”, “sexual harassment”, “stalking or following”, “touching” or “other”. Other questions were focused on asking reporters to provide information about the offence, including the location and date of the offence and the offender (including their name, address and physical features/characteristics). Reporters were also given the option to either leave their name and contact details to receive follow-up support from SECASA, or to remain fully anonymous.

For the purpose of this submission, we would like to present how and why SARA may represent a best-practice example of alternative, confidential and informal reporting options. Following an analysis of 483 deidentified reports made to SARA between March 2013 and August 2016,¹⁷ our findings reveal two key features of this reporting platform:

- Firstly, that the information provided to SARA by survivors and other reporters is such that it may help with crime mapping and intelligence gathering.
- Secondly, that SARA may be meeting the therapeutic and justice needs of survivors, such as voice, validation and information.¹⁸

¹⁶ Liu, H. 2018. “When whispers enter the cloud: Evaluating technology to prevent and report sexual assault”, *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 939-963.

¹⁷ This analysis refers to data from reports made to SARA from March 2013, when the application was first launched to August 2016, at which point SECASA provided the data to researchers at RMIT University to analyse.

¹⁸ Clark, H. 2010. “What is the justice system willing to offer? Understanding sexual assault victim/survivors’ criminal justice needs”, *Family Matters*, vol. 85, pp. 28–37; Clark, H. 2015. “A fair way to go: Justice for victim-survivors of sexual violence”, in A. Powell, N. Henry & A. Flynn (eds.), *Rape justice: Beyond the criminal law* (pp. 18-35). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Personal communications with the Technology Officer at SECASA revealed that in the seven years it was operational, SARA received over 2,000 reports of sexual assault – of which a significant minority (35%) came from interstate. The widespread uptake of SARA by survivors of sexual violence is indicative of the potential anonymous reporting applications can have on encouraging victims to come forward to tell their story as well as assist police in mapping sexually violent crimes if they are mediated through an appropriate support service. These initial reports to SARA may also contribute to an increase in formal reporting. In 2020, SARA was shut down by SECASA due to privacy concerns. Nonetheless, we argue that the platform had the capacity to meet both criminal justice and therapeutic needs, demonstrating that written-response interview protocols are a viable option for reporting sexual assault.¹⁹ We claim it should be used as a model upon which to develop future anonymous and confidential reporting platforms, however further research with police, support services and survivors is needed to appropriately design and effectively collaborate on its implementation, function and use.

There were several other key findings from the analysis of anonymous reports made to SARA, which include:

1. Survivors provide high quality levels of information about the offender, including their name, address and where the offence took place, which may be of significance for crime mapping and intelligence gathering. Indeed, the analysis showed repeat offenders with offences taking place in the same or similar locations.
2. The majority of offences reported came from Victoria (60%), however a significant minority were reported from interstate, particularly New South Wales (17%) along with Queensland (6%), South Australia (5%) and Western Australia (4%), as well as overseas (3%). It is worth noting that reports made to SARA included reports for offences that occurred in NSW and QLD, who have their own reporting tools associated with police. This suggests that an

¹⁹ Heydon, G., & Powell, A. 2018. "Written-response interview protocols: An innovative approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault allegations", *Policing and Society*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 631-646.

informal reporting tool associated with a support service may be perceived as a more viable place to report sexual assault anonymously rather than directly to police.

3. Survivors reported a range of experiences not just sexual assault, including sexual harassment, stalking and technology-facilitated violence. This demonstrates that survivors wish to document a range of sexually violent experiences, not just sexual assault through informal reporting tools (and some survivors reported a range of experiences perpetrated by current or former partners).
4. Although over 75% of reports made to SARA were self-reports, nearly 25% were made by individuals who may have witnessed an offence or the offence had been disclosed to them by the survivor themselves. This suggests that informal reporting tools may be readily adopted by bystanders.
5. Over 50% of survivors who left their contact details took up support from relevant rape crisis services. This high uptake highlights the significance of informal reporting tools connecting survivors with appropriate support services.
6. Around 20% of reports generated police interest that resulted in survivors wanting to make a formal report or an informal (but not anonymous) report with the support of the rape crisis centre. Again, this demonstrates the significance of support services as useful intermediaries between survivors and police helping them navigate the justice system.
7. Survivors who did not wish to engage with police indicated they had made reports in order to keep their communities safer by bringing the offender to the attention of police.
8. Survivors reported sexual violence as far back as the 1950s, and there were several cases of ongoing abuse. Many of these reports of historical abuse were not specifically for the purposes of engaging police, but rather survivors saw the informal reporting tool as a space to document their experiences.

Recommendations and concluding remarks regarding anonymous reporting options

The findings presented in this submission demonstrate the significant potential for alternative and anonymous reporting options to address survivors' therapeutic needs as well as assist the

police in crime reporting. The analysis demonstrates first and foremost that the provision of the reporting option by a rape crisis centre may generate the most significant opportunity for positive outcomes for survivors. As our findings indicate, a majority of reporters who left their contact details were connected with support services and provided with counselling and information to assist them in with their therapeutic needs. This is a substantial improvement in the provision of support compared to the many reporting services, which either provided no such support or provided only contact information for support services.²⁰

We fully support the development of an anonymous and alternative reporting tool to be redeveloped in Victoria, and make the following recommendations about what it should look like:

- **Anonymous and alternative reporting tools should reflect the specific justice needs of victim-survivors and provide an opportunity for them to further articulate their needs, hopes and reasons for using the anonymous tool:**
 - Future reporting tools could include a feature that allows survivors to articulate why they chose to report using an anonymous reporting tool. Although the SARA form did not ask reporters to explain why they chose to report their experiences, there were nonetheless many such explanations provided in the data, which highlights that this could be a significant feature.
 - Research indicates that survivors' justice needs and interests vary greatly and change over time and include, but are not limited to, voice, validation, information and community protection.²¹
 - A further significant finding of this research is the articulation of the survivors' needs in their own words, regarding reporting their experiences. Reporters described

²⁰ Heydon, G., & Powell, A. 2018. "Written-response interview protocols: An innovative approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault allegations", *Policing and Society*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 631-646.

²¹ Clark, H. 2010. "What is the justice system willing to offer? Understanding sexual assault victim/survivors' criminal justice needs", *Family Matters*, vol. 85, pp. 28-37; Clark, H. 2015. "A fair way to go: Justice for victim-survivors of sexual violence", in A. Powell, N. Henry & A. Flynn (eds). *Rape justice: Beyond the criminal law* (pp. 18-35). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; McGlynn, C., Downes, J., & Westmarland, N. 2017. "Seeking justice for survivors of sexual violence: Recognition, voice and consequences", in E. Zinsstag & M. Keenan (eds.), *Restorative responses to sexual violence: Legal, social and therapeutic dimensions* (pp. 179-191). New York: Routledge.

needing to tell someone when they had no one else to talk to; needing to share information about a sexual predator that they believed would endanger others; feeling duty-bound to protect other women and feeling hopeful that their report would change the way that other survivors were treated. These expressions of need and hope are reflected in the literature about reporting sexual assault and in particular the research pointing to a justice gap between outcomes afforded by the formal reporting options in the criminal justice system and the outcomes that would provide a genuine sense of justice for survivors of sexual assault.

- **We recommend that alternative reporting tools be anonymous and informal, and linked to support services:**
 - The anonymous and informal nature of alternative reporting tools avoids some of the acknowledged problems with formal reporting processes, such as the secondary trauma and victimisation of cross-examination in court,²² the fear of wasting police time²³ and the reluctance to report an experience that might not “fit” within normative assumptions about rape.²⁴
 - This should include support services tailored to the needs of specific groups, such as LGBTIQ+ communities, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and those for whom their primary language is not English.
- **We recommend that the design of anonymous and alternative reporting options not contain unnecessarily rigorous or invasive questions, or questions that reinforce victim-blaming and other rape myths:**

²² Rich, K. 2014. *Interviewing rape victims: Practice and policy issues in an international context*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Jordan, J. 2008. “Perfect victims, perfect policing?: Improving rape complainants experiences of police investigations”, *Public Administration*, vol. 86, pp. 699–719.

²³ Weiss, K. 2010. “Too ashamed to report: deconstructing the shame of sexual victimisation”, *Feminist Criminology*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 275-298; Weiss, K. 2011, “Neutralising sexual victimisation: A typology of victims’ non-reporting accounts”, *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 445-467.

²⁴ Du Mont, J., Miller, K., & Myhr, T., 2003. “The role of ‘real rape’ and ‘real victim’ stereotypes in the police reporting practices of sexually assaulted women”, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 9, no.4, pp. 466-486.

- A key finding of our research is the extent to which alternative reporting options elicit highly detailed information about sexually violent offences without having a rigorous or invasive set of questions. This is an important consideration for law enforcement because decades of extensive research into good practice investigative interviewing indicates questions need to be designed to have the least possible impact on the answers provided by interviewees.²⁵
- Sexual assault reporting forms which ask mainly specific questions or provide only checkbox lists are at high risk of contaminating the evidence in the report.²⁶
- By comparison, SARA allowed reporters to provide free form text responses to many questions and invites a narrative account of what has happened. In this way, the information is provided in a way that is mostly consistent with good practice police interviewing methods, such as the “Whole Story Approach” developed by the Victoria Police.²⁷ In the event that the reporter chooses to proceed with a formal complaint, the information they provide in a police interview is less likely to be influenced or contaminated by the earlier experience of telling their story via the anonymous reporting tool.
- By designing anonymous reporting tools and questions in an open format, survivors have the capacity to provide as little or as much information about the offender as they wish. As highlighted above, our analysis revealed that many chose to identify the offenders along with their address, place of work and email address or social media accounts. Not only is this useful information from a policing perspective, but designing reporting tools in this way can fulfil survivors’ justice needs by giving them control and agency in what they want to report and how they want to report it.

²⁵ Milne, B., & Bull, R. (1999). *Investigative interviewing: Psychology and practice*. London: Wiley.

²⁶ Heydon, G., & Powell, A. 2018. “Written-response interview protocols: An innovative approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault allegations”, *Policing and Society*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 631-646.

²⁷ Tidmarsh, P., Powell, M., & Darwinkle, E. 2012. “‘Whole story’: A new framework for conducting investigative interviews about sexual assault”, *Journal of Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice*, vol. 4, pp. 33-44.

- **Alternative and anonymous reporting options should be provided with substantial funding and support for rape crisis centres so that every report can be effectively heard and responded to:**
 - In the time that SARA was operational, more than 2,000 reports were made. However, maintaining the reporting tool required dedicated staffing resources, which may overwhelm support services. Appropriate financial support is needed for rape crisis centres to assist in the maintenance of informal reporting options.
- **Future efforts to establish an appropriate digital reporting tool within state jurisdictions or at a national level need to be provided with the necessary IT resources to ensure its appropriate functioning and maintenance:**
 - This includes appropriate privacy measures, access to data and data security, along with the relevant support services allocated suitable staffing to work alongside survivors and police to maintain the digital reporting tool's functioning.²⁸
- **We recommend that anonymous and confidential tools for reporting sexual assault must be designed and implemented collaboratively:**
 - It is unclear whether SARA's popularity was driven by the fact that it was developed, implemented, and promoted as a reporting option by a rape crisis centre. However, given the challenges outlined above relating to the reporting of sexual assault to police, it is likely that having a support service as a buffer or gateway was significant. We recommend continuing to develop a triangulated approach to designing and implementing a tool based on best-practice cognitive interview techniques that centre survivors' voices in order to simultaneously meet their justice and therapeutic needs as well as foster useful outcomes for police. Policing outcomes may include crime mapping, intelligence gathering and the conversion of informal reports to

²⁸ Liu, H. 2018. "When whispers enter the cloud: Evaluating technology to prevent and report sexual assault", *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp., 939-963.

formal ones – however, there should not be any pressure placed on survivors to formalise their disclosures.

- **Reporting options should be flexible in design accounting for a range of abilities with clear information provided to reporters about what happen to the information provided:**
 - Informal reporting options should provide flexibility in how survivors record their experience (e.g., written options, verbal options), and be made available in a range of languages other than English. Reporting tools should be developed in collaboration with disability support groups to ensure they are universally accessible. Reporting tools should be inclusive of diverse gender, sex and sexuality.
 - Alternative reporting options should contain a clear statement about what is involved in this particular reporting process, what questions they will be asked, how much personal/identifying information they will be asked to give, what will happen to their report, whether they will be able to access the report once it has been filed, to indicate if they would like a follow-up phone call/text/email from police and/or support services.

Thank you for considering our submission. If you have any questions, please contact Associate Professor Georgina Heydon, RMIT University: georgina.heydon@rmit.edu.au