Safety, sexual harassment and assault at Australian music festivals: final report

Dr Bianca Fileborn[1, 2], Dr Phillip Wadds[2] & Professor Stephen Tomsen[3]

[1]School of Social & Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

[2]School of Social Sciences and Centre for Crime, Law and Justice UNSW Sydney

[3]The School of Social Sciences & Psychology, Western Sydney University

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Executive Summary

Background & Aims

Despite increasing anecdotal evidence that sexual violence occurs at music festivals, to date no research has addressed this issue. This pilot project aimed to establish a research base in this area by investigating patron experiences and perceptions of sexual assault, harassment and safety at music festivals in Australia.

Methods

This project involved three phases:

1. Observation at the 2017-18 Falls Festival
2. An online survey conducted with 500 patrons of the 2017-18 Falls Festival
3. One-on-one interviews with 16 individuals who had experienced, or had been involved in responding to, sexual violence at music festivals across Australia.

It should be noted that while participants for the survey were recruited from patrons who attended the Falls Festival, the survey asked participants about their perceptions of sexual violence and safety at music festivals *in general*, i.e., these findings are not specific to the Falls Festival.

Key Findings – Surveys

The online survey addressed a range of issues relating to participant demographics, perceptions of safety and sexual violence at Australian music festivals, and alcohol and drug consumption at festival events. Key findings include:

- The vast majority of participants reported that they either 'usually' (61.5%) or 'always' (29%) feel safe at music festivals.
- A strong majority of participants indicated that they believe physical violence (92.8%, n=347), sexual harassment (95.1%, n=351) and sexual assault (88.6%, n=295) occur at music festivals.
- Participants were less certain as to whether homophobic or transphobic violence occur, with 61.2% (n=148) and 61.6% (n=141) of participants respectively responding that they thought these forms of violence happened at music festivals.
- Most participants believed that sexual harassment occurs 'often' (31.2%) or 'very often' (30.2%) at music festivals.

- Participants indicated they would be 'extremely' likely to report sexual assault (75.2%, n=215) and sexual harassment (62%, n=176) to the police. However, this does not reflect the actions of participants who had directly experienced these forms of violence.

- Almost all participants (99%) consumed alcohol at music festivals, while just under half (47.8%) consumed drugs. Previous research illustrates that music festival attendees use illicit drugs at a higher rate than the general population (Lim et al. 2010). However, rates of use for our sample are considerably lower than those identified in previous research. For example, 65.3% of participants in another Australian study reported using illicit drugs at festivals (Hughes & Moxham-Hall, 2017).

Key Findings – Interviews

Interviews were conducted with individuals who had experienced, or were involved in responding to, sexual violence that occurred at *any* Australian music festival. Participants were asked to reflect on the nature of their festival experience(s), the impacts of their experience(s) of sexual violence, what role the festival setting played in facilitating the violence, their experience(s) with reporting and disclosure, and reflections on steps festivals could take to both prevent and better respond to sexual violence. Key findings included:

- Participants reported diverse experiences of sexual violence, ranging from sexual harassment (e.g., verbal comments) through to actions that may constitute sexual assault.

- Groping and other forms of sexual touching in crowded moshpit and performance areas was a common experience.

- Perpetrators were overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, men.

- Bystanders (other patrons) rarely intervened when sexual violence was occurring.

- Experiencing sexual violence of all kinds resulted in negative and often ongoing impacts, including hyper-vigilance, altered behavior at festivals, anxiety, and shock.

- Most participants did not report to police, security or festival staff. Those who did report typically recalled negative responses from authority figures, such as victim-blaming, not taking the report seriously, and/or a failure to take appropriate action.

- Participants viewed the male-dominated nature of the music industry as a contributing factor to sexual violence in festival spaces.

- Zero-tolerance policing of drugs and anti-social behavior deterred participants from reporting to police.

- Participants expressed the need for music festivals to introduce a range of policy and practice-based changes in order to better respond to and prevent sexual violence. We drew on these suggestions in developing our recommendations.

Key Recommendations

Festival policy and management:

1. Introduce clear protocols and consistent messaging about sexual violence, including consequences for perpetrators.
2. Increase the number of female police and security staff working on-site.
3. Develop multiple avenues for reporting sexual violence at festivals and ensuring all staff are adequately trained to receive and respond to these reports.
4. Implement processes for the systematic documentation of incidents of sexual violence.
5. Follow through on reports with feedback to victim-survivors.
6. Implement the provision of on-site access to appropriate support services.

Environment:

1. Provision of quiet 'chill out' spaces.
2. Ensure security and police are distributed throughout festival spaces, including regular patrols or emergency contact points in camping grounds.
3. Introduce section markers or signposting in camping grounds to improve way finding.
4. Enhance lighting, particularly in isolated areas such as camping grounds.
5. Ensure signage establishing behavioural standards is clearly visible throughout all spaces at festival.
6. Introduce clear and consistently identifiable markers to note the location of security staff in and around performance spaces.

Cultural change:

1. Continued efforts to make festival line-ups more gender equitable and diverse.
2. Encouragement of pro-social behavior, such as bystander intervention.
3. Encouragement of an ethic of care among festival patrons.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

There is increasing local and international evidence that sexual assault and harassment occur at music festivals (Lewis, 2017; Medhora, 2017; Seidler, 2017; Stephens, 2017; Taylor, 2017), with some industry acknowledgement that official event and other responses have not been ideal (Francis, 2017; Kreps, 2017). Notably, numerous incidents of sexual assault were reported at the Tasmanian Falls Festival in 2016-17 (Medhora, 2017), with incidents of sexual assault and harassment also recorded the 2017 Rainbow Serpent (Bowden, 2017) and Laneway festivals (Seidler, 2017). However, given the barriers associated with reporting sexual assault in general (Lievore, 2005), it is likely that the actual prevalence of sexual assault at festivals is substantially higher. While some festivals have taken steps to introduce policy, training and safe spaces (Francis, 2016), and reporting hotlines (Butler, 2017), anecdotally, these appear to have had minimal impact on preventing sexual assault, and the efficacy of these measures has not been investigated. Consequently, there is an increased public and industry focus on festival responses and mounting pressure to respond 'well' to reports of sexual harassment and other forms of violence at music events (Francis, 2017; Kreps, 2017).

Currently, there is an absence of research on the nature and prevalence of sexual assault, harassment and broader issues of public safety at music festivals, making it very difficult to develop evidence-based policy. A recent UK-based study suggests that sexual harassment and assault are common experiences for young adults attending music festivals (YouGov, 2018). The study, conducted by YouGov (2018), reported that 30% of young women and 14% of young men had experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault at a music festival, with unwelcome forceful dancing and verbal harassment being the most common experiences. Younger participants were more likely to have encountered this behaviour, with 44% of those aged 18-24 reporting having experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault, compared to 24% of those in the 25-49-year age bracket. However, this emerging data tells us little about how and why sexual violence occurs at music festivals, and of course does not provide insight into the Australian context.

While there is some analogous research in and around licensed venues and within large nightlife precincts (Fileborn, 2016a; 2016b; Graham et al., 2014; Graham et al., in press; Lubman et al, 2013; Markwell and Tomsen, 2009; Miller et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2014; Tomsen, 1997; 2014a; 2014b; Tomsen and Markwell, 2010), many aspects of music festivals are unique. For example, the physical size or scale of music festivals is typically much larger

than a licensed venue, while festivals can also include the provision of more isolated spaces such as campsites. The patron numbers of some festivals are akin to that of a small town, with patrons coming together for one or several days before dispersing. Festival spaces are thus temporary or transient ones, and this will pose particular challenges with regards to the provision of facilities and regulation of space. Patterns of drug and alcohol use may also differ at music festivals, an issue we address later in this report. This all suggests that music festivals may have distinct environmental, cultural and social aspects, making it unclear to what extent the research on licensed venues readily translates across to music festival settings.

Together, this discussion illustrates a clear need for research that examines the nature of sexual violence occurring at music festivals in Australia. The findings presented in this report represent the first Australian, and one of the only studies internationally, to document sexual violence that occurs at music festivals, as well as patron attitudes towards and understandings of such violence. The research presented here stems from a pilot study undertaken in partnership with the Falls Festival and provides *initial* insights into this issue. While our findings present important implications for the management of music festivals and responses to sexual violence, it is clear that further research is required to develop a holistic and nuanced understanding of the issue, and to examine the relationship between culture, space and violence across a broader spectrum of festival types. In the following sections of the report we provide an overview of the project methods, key findings and recommendations for policy, practice and research.

Methods

This pilot project aimed to establish and investigate patron experiences and perceptions of sexual assault, harassment and safety at music festivals in Australia. The project aimed to:

- Explore factors influencing patron safety at music festivals;
- Explore factors that may facilitate sexual harassment and assault occurring, including but not limited to: festival culture, attitudes of patrons towards sexual violence/assault, drug and alcohol use, environmental design and layout;
- Examine patrons' attitudes and perceptions towards sexual violence and assault at music festivals;
- Establish and refine research methods in order to conduct a larger, follow-up study;
- Provide initial insight into policy, training and site management implications for festivals.

The project involved three components:
- An online survey with patrons from the 2017-18 Falls Festival
- On-site observation at the 2017-18 Falls Festival
- Interviews with individuals who have experienced sexual violence (self-defined) at *any* Australian music festival, or who have witnessed or responded to incidents of sexual violence.

The following sections provide further detail about each part of the project.

<u>Online survey</u>

An online survey was conducted with patrons from the 2017-18 Falls Festival. The survey was hosted on the UNSW *Qualtrics* platform, and consisted of both fixed and open-response questions addressing the following topic areas:

- Participant demographics (e.g., gender, age, sexuality)
- Drug and alcohol use at festivals and non-festival settings (using the validated Audit-C scale)
- Frequency of music festival attendance

- Perceptions and understandings of the 'Your Choice' campaign
- Perceptions of safety at the Falls Festival, and music festivals generally
- Perceptions of sexual, physical, homophobic and transphobic violence at music festivals
- Bystander intervention at music festivals
- Preferred reporting options for sexual, physical, homophobic and transphobic violence at music festivals

In order to be eligible for the survey, participants needed to be age 16 or older, and have attended the 2017-18 Falls Festival[1]. Participants were provided with a participant information statement that explained the nature of the survey and needed to indicate that they had read the statement and consented to take part in the survey before proceeding.

The survey was designed to provide insights into patrons' perceptions and understandings of sexual harassment and assault at music festivals in general (not limited to Falls Festival), and to examine the factors that shape their feeling of safety both at the Falls Festival, and at music festivals more generally.

Participants were primarily recruited through social and traditional media. The Falls Festival shared a Facebook advertisement targeted towards Facebook users who had attended the festival. The research team also distributed the survey link and advertisement via a project Facebook and Twitter account. The project received considerable media attention, and the survey link was shared through several articles published about the project, including on *The Conversation* and the Triple J *Hack* program website.

In total, 622 participants were recruited to the survey, far exceeding our initial target of 100-200 responses. Of these 622 responses, 500 were eligible to participate and had completed a sufficient amount of the survey to be included in the final analysis. An overview of survey participants is provided in the Key Findings section.

The quantitative survey data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were produced detailing the frequencies and mean scores for different demographic and participant responses,

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[1] Please note that although participants were drawn from patrons of the Falls Festival, most survey questions were about the general experience of festival attendance, not specific experiences from Falls.

including general perceptions of safety, alcohol risk of harm score (based on AUDIT-C scales), drug use, gender identity, sexual orientation, and age. More advanced multinomial logistic regression analyses were also conducted to examine the association between covariates.

Observation

Bianca Fileborn, Phillip Wadds and a research assistant undertook site observation at one site of the 2017-18 Falls Festival. The observations were semi-structured in nature and focused on detailing the lived experience of festivals and the dynamic interplay between festival space, culture and behaviour. Field observations were critical to the wider research design, helping to inform key research questions used in both the survey and interviews. While the research team established a pre-determined series of spaces and behaviours to observe, we were also open to unexpected or unplanned observations. Our observational approach was participatory in nature, providing critical insights into patron festival experiences. As much as possible, the research team aimed to 'blend' in with the crowd. Site photos and notes were taken discreetly where possible, with full notes being written up when we had returned to our campsite. This was in order to avoid the potential to make other patrons feel uncomfortable (for example, if they noticed they were being watched and their actions recorded), and for practical reasons. We do not address the findings of the observations in this report, however we do draw on these in informing our recommendations

Interviews

The third instrument of data collection consisted of one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 participants who had either directly experienced sexual violence at an Australian music festival, who had witnessed sexual violence occurring, or who were responsible for responding to sexual violence after it had occurred. It is important to reiterate that this part of the project was open to individuals who experienced sexual violence at *any* Australian festival – this component of the project was ***not*** specific to the Falls Festival.

What constitutes 'sexual violence' was left for participants to define. That is, we were interested in speaking to individuals who had experienced anything that they defined or labelled as sexual violence, regardless of whether these experiences would meet any legal threshold or criterion. This included instances of sexual violence ranging from what are commonly labelled as 'minor' incidents, such as sexual harassment, verbal comments and staring, through to incidents that would legally constitute sexual assault or rape.

In contrast to the surveys, which examined perceptions and understandings of sexual and other violence, the one-on-one interviews were concerned with documenting first-hand experiences of such violence. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, meaning that while we followed a series of pre-determined questions, we also asked each participant unique questions based on their particular experiences. In general, the interviews covered the following themes:

- Demographic information
- General experiences attending music festivals
- General perceptions of safety at music festivals
- Experience(s) of sexual harassment/assault at a music festival
- Impacts of the experience
- Prevention and moving forward

Interview participants were recruited through a range of means. At the end of the online survey, survey participants were able to indicate if they would like to receive information about the interviews. Contact information provided was stored separately to the survey results. The interviews were also promoted through the aforementioned project social media accounts and media articles. Key organisations, such as LISTEN, were approached and asked to share the interview recruitment advertisement through their social media accounts and other networks. Interested individuals were asked to contact the research team and were provided with a copy of the participant information statement and the interview question themes.

Participants had the option of speaking to a male or female interviewer. Interviews were conducted via phone, Skype or face-to-face depending upon the participant's preference and geographic location. Each interview was digitally recorded with participants' consent and transcribed confidentially by an external service. The interviews typically took between 45-60 minutes to complete.

Interviews were analysed by Bianca Fileborn and Phillip Wadds using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This style of analysis involves the identification of key themes within and across the interview data.

Key Findings

Online survey

Participant demographics

An overview of key participant demographics is provided in Table 1. The survey sample comprised of more women (67.4%, n=328) than men (32.6%, n=159). Only a small number of gender diverse individuals took part in the survey, so the experiences of this group are not captured here. Likewise, the vast majority of participants were heterosexual (89.3%, n=433), with an average age of 21.4 years old.

TABLE 1. *Demographics*

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %) N = 500
GENDER IDENTITY	
Male	159 (32.6%)
Female	328 (67.4%)
Transgender/non-binary*	2 (.4%)
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Heterosexual	393 (87.6%)
Gay	7 (1.5%)
Lesbian	4 (.9%)
Queer	4 (.9%)
Bisexual	27 (6.0.%)
Asexual*	1 (.2%)
Demisexual*	1 (.2%)
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	
Incomplete high school	15 (3.1%)
High school	250 (51.1%)
TAFE	59 (12.1%)
Undergraduate degree	149 (30.5%)
Postgraduate degree	16 (3.3%)
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Unemployed	30 (6.2%)
Casual	185 (38.2%)
Part time	98 (20.2%)
Full time	171 (35.3%)
AGE	
Average age (*SD*)	21.39 years (4.34)
Minimum age	17 years
Maximum age	56 years

Feelings and perceptions of safety

Overall, participants reported that they either 'usually' (36.66%, n=169) or 'always' (57.05%, n=263) felt safe at the 2017-18 Falls Festival. Small numbers of participants indicated that they 'never' (0.22%, n=1), 'rarely' (0.65%, n=3) or 'sometimes' (4.12%, n=19) felt safe at Falls Festival. In contrast, 29% (n=134) and 61.5% (n=283) of participants said that they 'always' or 'usually' felt safe respectively at music festivals in general.

Participants were asked to identify factors that help them to feel safe at the Falls Festival, with an overview of findings presented in Table 5. Being with friends was the most common response, with just over 70% (n=353) indicating that their friends help them to feel safe. Lighting (49%, n=245), crowds (39.4%, n=197), and security (47.6%, n=238) and police presence (37.8%, n=189) were also important in helping participants feel safe. However, as we discuss later, the responses of interview participants suggest that the role of police and security in promoting safety is complex, and these groups could also have a negative impact on perceptions of safety.

TABLE 5. Factors promoting feelings of SAFETY

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
FALLS FESTIVAL	
Lighting	245 (49.0%)
Crowds	197 (39.4%)
Being drunk	88 (17.6%)
Being high	52 (10.4%)
Others being drunk	42 (8.4%)
Others being high	42 (8.4%)
Friends present	353 (70.6%)
Security present	238 (47.6%)
Police present	189 (37.8%)
Groups of men present	36 (7.2%)
Groups of women present	68 (13.6%)

Participants were also asked to identify any factors that make them feel *less* safe at the Falls Festival. The drug and alcohol consumption of other patrons were the most common responses, with 40.2% (n=201) and 34% (n=170) of participants respectively saying that drug and alcohol affected patrons made them feel unsafe. Overcrowding was also a concern for just over 30% (n=68) of participants, suggesting a delicate balance between crowd size promoting or impinging upon perceptions of safety. Finally, just under a quarter of participants (n=124) said that groups of men made them feel unsafe. A full overview of the factors contributing to feeling unsafe is provided in Table 6.

In terms of specific locations at Falls Festival, participants indicated that they were most likely to feel unsafe around the stage area (18%, n=90) and the camping grounds (15.6%, n=78).

TABLE 6. *Factors promoting feelings of UNSAFETY*

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
FALLS FESTIVAL	
Poor lighting	68 (13.6%)
Over crowding	153 (30.6%)
Crowds	62 (12.4%)
Being drunk	14 (2.8%)
Being high	15 (3.0%)
Others being drunk	170 (34.0%)
Others being high	201 (40.2%)
Security present	32 (6.4%)
Police present	70 (14.0%)
Groups of men present	124 (24.8%)
Groups of women present	4 (.8%)

To examine the correlation between demographic characteristics and perceptions of safety, survey responses were reverse scored, aggregated and categorised into three groups; a score one standard deviation below the mean was designated as "low perceptions of safety"; within one standard deviation of the mean was "moderate perceptions of safety", and one standard deviation above the mean was "high perceptions of safety". Unadjusted and adjusted multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the association between (i) moderate and (ii) high perceptions of safety and various patron characteristics, including age, gender, sexuality and alcohol and other drug use.

As seen in Table 7, participants reporting high perceptions of safety were significantly more likely to normally consume drugs (OR = 1.82), have higher alcohol risk of harm scores (OR = 1.21), be of an older age (OR = 1.09), be male (OR = 2.40), and heterosexual (OR = 2.59), than participants reporting low perceptions of safety. Participants with moderate perceptions of safety were also more likely to be male (OR = 2.63) and heterosexual (OR = 2.17) than those with low perceptions of safety. As can be seen from these findings, the most significant relationship affecting perceptions of safety were gender, sexuality and AOD consumption, with straight men feeling significantly safer than women and LGBT patrons in festival settings.

TABLE 7. Unadjusted multinomial logistic regression examining relationship between perceptions of safety and alcohol and drug consumption, age, gender identity and sexual orientation.

COVARIATES	PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AT FF	
	HIGH OR (95% CI)	MODERATE OR (95% CI)
Normally consumes drugs at FF	1.82 (1.09 – 3.02)*	1.12 (.72 – 1.74)
Does not normally consume drugs at FF (reference)	1.00	1.00
Risk of harm score	1.21 (1.06 – 1.37)**	1.08 (.97 – 1.21)
No drugs normally consumed (reference)	1.00	1.00
One drug normally consumed	1.56 (.87 – 2.80)	1.41 (.85 – 2.33)
Two or more drugs normally consumed	1.31 (.66 – 2.60)	.64 (.33 – 1.24)
Age	1.09 (1.02 – 1.16)*	1.02 (.96 – 1.09)
Female (reference)	1.00	1.00
Male	2.40 (1.40 – 4.14)**	2.63 (1.59 – 4.35)***
Queer/bisexual (reference)	1.00	1.00
Heterosexual	2.59 (1.19 – 5.64)*	2.17 (1.13 – 4.16)*

Note: reference group was low perception of safety.

$* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.$

Perceptions of sexual, physical, transphobic and homophobic violence

Participants were asked to indicate whether they thought particular types of violence occur at music festivals. These questions were asked about music festivals in general, and were not specific to the Falls Festival. Participants thought that physical violence (92.8%, n=347), sexual harassment (95.1%, n=351) and sexual assault (88.6%, n=295) occur at music festivals. Participants were less certain as to whether homophobic or transphobic violence occur, with 61.2% (n=148) and 61.6% (n=141) of participants respectively responding that they thought these forms of violence happened at music festivals. This finding may also be reflective of the relatively small number of gender and sexuality diverse participants who took part in the survey.

Participants indicated that these types of violence were highly gendered in terms of who they were most likely to impact. Participants overwhelming suggested that sexual harassment
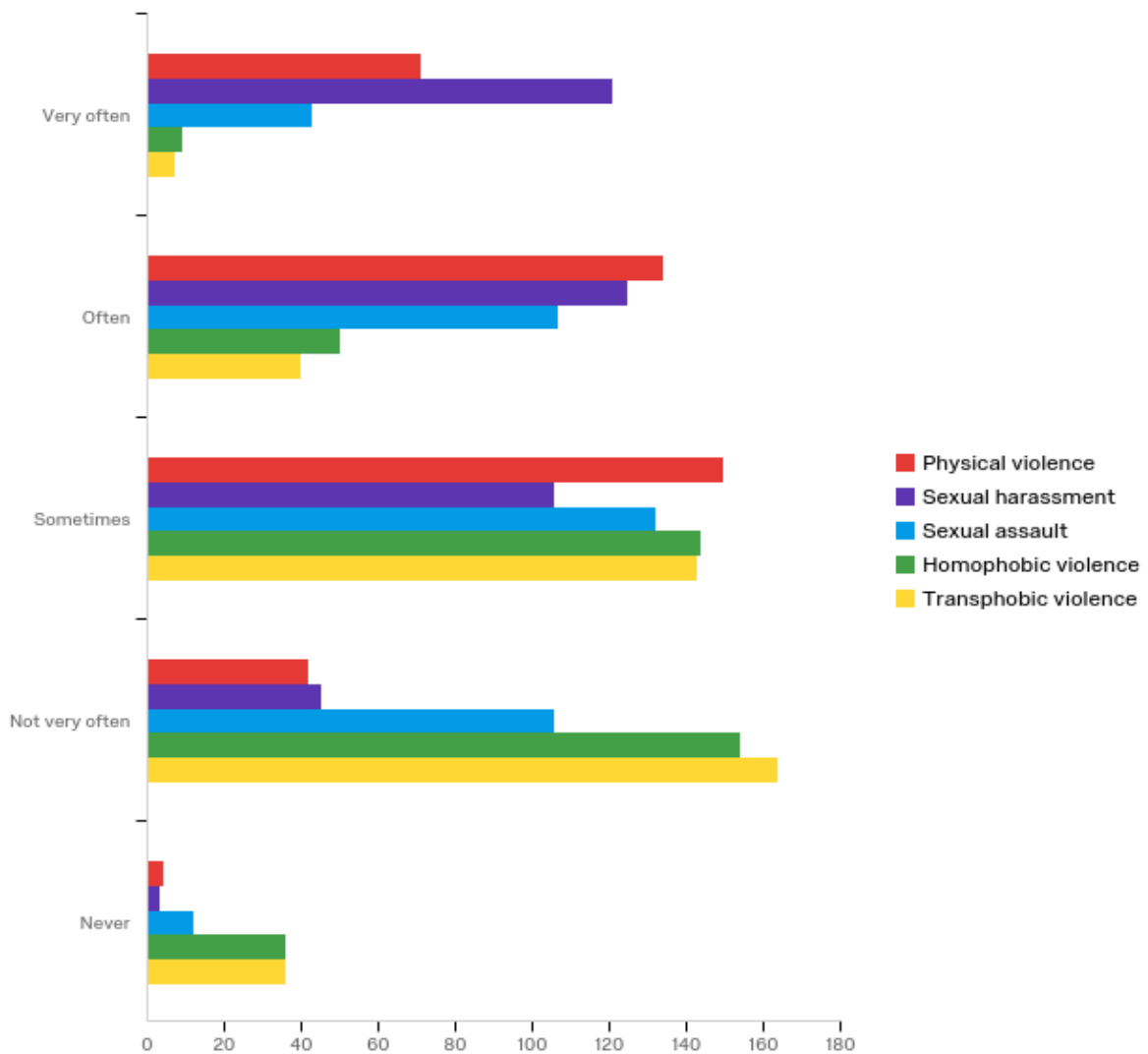
(87.4%, n=346) and sexual assault (87.1%, n=338) would most likely impact on women, and this reflects patterns of victimization identified through sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey. Participants were less certain in terms of who was likely to be impacted by physical violence. A majority (63.8%, n=319) said they thought mostly men would be impacted by physical violence, while around 1/5 participants (16.4%, n=64) believed it impacted men and women equally at music festivals.

Participants were divided in terms of how commonly they believed these different forms of violence occurred at music festivals. While a majority of participants indicated that sexual harassment happened 'very often' or 'often', as Figure 1 illustrates, they were more likely to respond that sexual assault and physical violence happened 'sometimes'. Transphobic and homophobic violence were not perceived to be common occurrences.

TABLE 8. *Opinion if violence, assault, and harassment occurs at festivals*

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
THINKS THE FOLLOWING OCCURS AT FESTIVALS	
Physical violence	347 (92.8%)
Sexual harassment	351 (95.1%)
Sexual assault	295 (88.6%)
Homophobic violence	148 (61.2%)
Transphobic violence	141 (61.6%)

FIGURE 1. *Perception of frequency of violence at festivals*

Reporting preferences

Participants were asked to report their preferred options for reporting sexual harassment and assault at music festivals. In particular, participants were asked to indicate how likely they were to report sexual harassment or assault to different staff members or authority figures (police, security, bar staff, ambulance/medical, and festival volunteers), and how confident they would feel doing so. Participants indicated that they would be 'extremely' likely report to police (62%, n=176 for sexual harassment; 75.2%, n=215 for sexual assault), followed by security (56.5%, n=160 for sexual harassment; 61.1%, n=174 for sexual assault) and medical staff (51.9%, n=148 for sexual harassment; 61.9%, n=177). Participants were least likely to say they would report an incident to bar staff or festival volunteers. However, it is important to note that these findings were not reflected in the first-hand experiences of interview participants (discussed

later). This suggests that there may be a difference between what participants *think* they would do in reporting sexual harassment or assault, and what *actually* happens in the aftermath of an incident.

Participants expressed lower levels of confidence in reporting sexual harassment to all staff and authority groups. For instance, 42.5% (n=117) of participants said they would be 'extremely confident' reporting sexual harassment to the police. Only 13.5% of participants (n=3) indicated they would be 'extremely confident' in reporting sexual harassment to bar staff. Perceived confidence levels in reporting sexual assault were slightly higher, with 51.3% (n=140) saying they would be 'extremely confident' reporting to police. In contrast, 17% (n=46) said they would be 'extremely confident' reporting sexual assault to bar staff.

Confidence levels mirrored the groups that participants said they were most likely to report to – i.e., the more likely participants said they were to report to a group, the higher the level of confidence in reporting to that group.

Alcohol and other drug consumption

- Most participants (99%) regularly consumed alcohol at music festivals and had an average AUDIT-C score of 5.69 (*SD* = 1.95), which corresponded to a high risk of harm (Bradley et al, 2007; Frank et al, 2008). Just under half of the participants (47.8%) reported that they normally consumed drugs at music festivals. Ecstasy was the most common drug consumed at music festivals (n = 188, 42.6%), followed by cannabis (*n* = 109, 24.7%) and then cocaine (*n* = 54, *12.2%*). Poly-drug consumption was also relatively common, with 31.5% of participants indicating that they normally consumed two or more illicit or other drug types at festival events. Details of participant alcohol consumption can be seen in Table 2, while details of illicit and other drug consumption can be seen in Table 3, below. Previous research illustrates that music festival attendees use illicit drugs at a higher rate than the general population (Lim et al. 2010). However, rates of use for our sample are considerably lower than those identified in previous research. For example, 65.3% of participants in another Australian study reported using illicit drugs at festivals (Hughes & Moxham-Hall, 2017).

Festival patrons surveyed also indicated that they drink more alcohol in a typical drinking session at festivals than they would in a typical drinking session outside of festival events

(72.3% typically consume 5 or more standard alcoholic drinks in general when drinking, while 81.7% drink 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a typical session when drinking at festivals). When considering very high levels of alcohol consumption (10 or more drinks in a session), respondents again were significantly more likely to consume 10 or more alcoholic drinks at a festival as opposed to outside of festivals (46.7% indicated they drink 10 or more drinks at festivals, while 18.7% indicated they typically drink 10 or more drinks outside festivals).

A number of exploratory analyses were conducted to examine the relationship with AUDIT-C scores and gender, drug use, and age. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to identify if the average AUDIT-C scores significantly differed between (i) males and females, and (ii) participants who do and do not normally consume drugs at music festivals. On average, males ($M = 6.53$; $SD = 1.96$) had significantly higher AUDIT-C scores than females ($M = 5.27$; $SD = 1.79$), $t = 6.96$, $p < .001$. Likewise, AUDIT-C scores were significantly higher for participants who normally consume drugs at music festivals ($M = 6.16$; $SD = 1.86$) than those who do not ($M = 5.18$; $SD = 1.90$), $t = 5.49$, $p < .001$. Another independent samples t-test was conducted to identify if the average age of participants differed by whether they normally consumed drugs at music festivals, although no significant difference was found. Finally, a Pearson's correlation indicates a significant negative correlation between age and AUDIT-C scores ($r = -.107$, $p = .022$), indicating that as age decreased, alcohol consumption increased, and vice-versa.

TABLE 2. Alcohol consumption

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION FREQUENCY	
Never	5 (1.0%)
2-4 times per month	284 (58.7%)
2-3 times per week	170 (35.1%)
4+ times per week	25 (5.2%)
ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION FREQUENCY RECODED	
Infrequently	289 (59.7%)
Frequently	195 (40.3$)
ALCOHOL AMOUNT ON TYPICAL DAY	
Never	4 (.8%)
1-2 drinks	34 (7.1%)
3-4 drinks	97 (20.3%)
5-6 drinks	152 (31.9%)
7-9 drinks	101 (21.2%)
10+ drinks	89 (18.7%)
ALCOHOL AMOUNT ON TYPICAL DAY RECODED	

Less than 5 drinks	131 (27.7%)
5 or more drinks	342 (72.3%)
ALCOHOL CONSUMED AT MUSIC FESTIVALS	
Average drinks (*SD*)	8.97 (7.98)
Minimum drinks	0
Maximum drinks	90

TABLE 3. *Drug consumption*

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
DRUGS CONSUMED AT MUSIC FESTIVALS	
Ecstasy	188 (42.6%)
Cocaine	54 (12.2%)
Speed	20 (4.5%)
ICE	0
Amphetamines	15 (3.4%)
Stimulants	14 (3.2%)
Other pharmaceuticals	8 (1.8%)
Ketamine	22 (5.0%)
Benzodiazepines	2 (.5%)
GHB	2 (.5%)
LSD	38 (8.6%)
Nitrous Oxide	13 (2.9%)
Magic mushrooms	18 (4.1%)
Cannabis	109 (24.7%)
Heroin	0
Other opiates	3 (.7%)
Mephedrone	1 (.2%)
Normally consume drugs at music festival indicator	211 (47.8%)
DRUG TYPES NORMALLY CONSUMED	
None	237 (53.7%)
One	65 (14.7%)
Two	57 (12.9%)
Three	41 (9.3%)
Four or more	41 (9.3%)

"Your Choice" campaign

The "Your Choice" campaign was launched in 2017 as a means of confronting and combatting violence, discrimination and sexual assault at music events and mass gatherings. As such, it forms a critical part of attempts industry stakeholder to change the culture of music spaces, including festivals. To ascertain the extent of patron awareness of the campaign at the Falls Festival event and consequently judge the effectiveness of Your Choice in achieving its objectives, a series of three survey questions were asked around this topic, including "did you notice the Your Choice campaign at the Falls Festival?"; "Where did you see the advertisements?", and an open-ended question "in your own words, can you describe what the "Your Choice" advertisement was about?"

A majority (62.73%, n=293) reported they had seen the advertisements. However, just under a quarter (23.34%, n=109) of participants indicated they had not seen the "Your Choice" campaign materials, while a further 13.92% (n=65) couldn't remember if they had seen the

campaign or not. As illustrated in Table 4, the majority of participants who noticed the campaign reported seeing advertisements on their wristband, stage signage, and posters placed around the festival site. A further 10 participants commented they had seen campaign materials placed in toilets, and one participant indicated they heard an artist discuss the campaign on stage.

TABLE 4. "Your Choice".

VARIABLE	COUNT (VALID %)
NOTICE "YOUR CHOICE" CAMPAIGN ADVERTISED	
On wristband	249 (61.9%)
On stage	135 (33.6%)
On festival website	62 (15.4%)
Posters around the festival	153 (38.1%)
Festival phone app	82 (20.4%)
Elsewhere	12 (3.0%)

However, participants were less certain with regards to what the "Your Choice" campaign was about. 159 open text response comments were made. One comment was excluded from the analysis, as it consisted of transphobic abuse. Some comments were coded under more than one theme.

The vast majority of participant comments (n=69) fell under the theme "making good choices". These comments typically indicated that the Your Choice campaign was about "making your own decisions", "not ruining the festival for others", and "it's our choice as the festival goers to make the right choices while attending the festival". However, these participants struggled to articulate the focus of the campaign beyond vague references to making the "right" choice, facing repercussions for your actions, or not engaging in anti-social behaviour, broadly defined.

A further 45 participants indicated that they "didn't know" what the Your Choice campaign was about. This was reflected in comments such as "not sure", "no idea", "no clue, we kept trying to figure it out", and "not a clue, was little information easily accessible".

Together with the poorly defined responses under the "making good choices" theme, these comments indicate that participants held limited to no understanding of the key messages of the Your Choice campaign, particularly as they relate to sexual consent and sexual assault. Indeed, only 28 participants made comments that indicated they were aware of the campaign's role as an anti-sexual violence effort. This was reflected in comments such as "consent", "about

understanding between consensual and non-consensual activity", and "it's my choice to participate in sexual activities". A similar number of participants (n=24) suggested that the campaign was focused on alcohol and drug consumption. For example, one participant comments it was about "your choice to drink or do drugs", while another said "if you choose to use substances, do it at your own pace – don't keep up with your mates. Only do what you feel comfortable with."

Interview findings

As outlined in the Methods section of this report, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with victim-survivors covered a number of key topics, including general experiences attending music festivals; perceptions of safety at music festivals; experience(s) of sexual harassment/assault at a music festival; the impacts of the experience (s) and methods for preventing sexual violence moving forward.

After initial coding, several key themes emerged across the interview data, including the intersectional role of gender, culture, environment, policing, and festival management and policy in creating settings conducive to sexual violence. We begin by providing a brief overview of participants' experiences of sexual violence, and the impacts of these.

Experiences and Impacts

Participants reported a wide range of incidents of sexual violence. The most common 'type' of experience involved groping and other forms of sexual touching in crowded moshpit areas. Other experiences included unwanted verbal comments of a sexual nature, unwanted kissing and digital penetration. A majority of participants shared multiple experiences of sexual violence, with sexual harassment particularly common. Participants included individuals who experienced sexual violence as both patrons and performers at festivals.

The vast majority of perpetrators were men, although a small number of participants also experienced or witnessed incidents perpetrated by women. In some cases, the gender of the perpetrator was unknown. Groups of men were also commonly identified as perpetrators, or a single perpetrator was encouraged and 'egged on' by male friends. While perpetrators were commonly drug or alcohol affected, this was not universally the case. Perpetrators were almost exclusively strangers. However, this may reflect the type of experiences that participants shared – this should not be interpreted to mean that friends, partners or other know individuals are less

likely to perpetrate in festival settings, particularly given that sexual assault more widely is overwhelmingly perpetrated by someone known to the victim-survivor.

Although participants commonly reported experiencing sexual violence in crowded areas, bystander intervention rarely occurred. When it did, it was most likely the participants' friends or partner who intervened. There appear to be a range of reasons for non-intervention. For instance, although many of these incidents took place in crowded spaces, they were not always easily observed by others – the tightly packed nature of the space obscured surveillance, despite this seeming perhaps counter-intuitive. Participants felt that some incidents may have looked ambiguous or 'normal' to onlookers, particularly strangers who may have assumed the participant knew the person harassing them. Participants also expressed concern for the safety and wellbeing of bystanders, and some recounted incidents where intervention exacerbated the situation further. Nonetheless, on the whole participants desired bystander intervention, and wanted others to notice and intervene when sexual violence was occurring.

Participants reported a range of impacts in the aftermath of experiencing sexual violence. These commonly included:

- Hyper-vigilance and concern for safety at festivals
- Limiting which festivals they attended
- Altering their dress or behaviour at festivals
- Changing use of festival space (e.g., no longer going in the moshpit)
- Consuming less or no alcohol or other drugs
- Anger
- Shock
- Anxiety
- Decreased tolerance of harassment and anti-social behaviour
- Increased willingness to act as a bystander
- Loss of trust – particularly of men and security guards

In a smaller number of cases, participants reported impacts such as suicidal ideation, and longer-term health conditions. Some participants also commented that their experiences inspired them to resist the cultural and social norms that enable sexual violence, and to call out problematic behaviour and attitudes.

Gender and Culture

The overarching theme of culture covers a broad range of topics that emerged from the interviews. As noted above, it is the complex interaction between culture and space that emerges as a central factor in much sexual violence occurring at music festivals. Interviewees discussed a range of ways that culture played into their victimisation experience, including strong commentary on the interplay between festival norms, high levels of drug and alcohol consumption and generally transgressive culture that permeates many live music subcultures.

The association with gender and culture should also be noted here, as it was the most salient issue raised by interviewees in relation to issues they saw with festival norms. Here, participants suggested that masculine norms centred on the subordination and dominance of women contributed significantly to general perceptions of safety at music festivals, but also to the direct victimisation experiences of survivors. Participants cited numerous examples where large groups of men, often intoxicated, utilised crowding, surveillance (or lack thereof) and other environmental factors (such as darkness/lighting) to engage in predatory, harassing and assaultive behaviour. Participants also linked festival norms to the broader norms of the Australian and international music industry with regards to gender. For example, participants commented that the music industry remains heavily male-dominated, that women were afforded less credibility, status and power, and that women were frequently objectified or over-sexualised within the industry. This was seen to feed into the broader cultural norms at music festivals that facilitate sexual harassment and assault occurring.

Conversely, culture was also raised as a protective factor and key reason why many victim-survivors preferred some festivals to others. For example, a culture or ethic of care within both friendship groups and across festival patronage more generally was linked with greater feelings of safety for participants. In fact, as discussed below, changing 'culture' (read: negatively associated festival dynamics linked with events) was one of the key recommendations that participants suggested could make a real difference to both their perceived and actual levels of safety at music festivals.

Environment

Similar to the way in which culture was said to influence the perpetration of sexual violence in its various forms, environmental factors were flagged as significant to the prevalence of sexual

violence occurring at music festivals. Here, crowd size and density, scale of festival grounds, limited means of formal and natural surveillance, lighting/ darkness, anonymity and isolation were all identified as factors contributing to the risk profile of music festivals. The interview data support and extend the findings from the survey discussed in this report. The majority of participants identified crowded spaces (i.e., moshpit and other performance spaces) as the primary sites of concern, and this was reflected in the seemingly higher prevalence of sexual violence occurring in these sites. In almost all interviews, reports of sexual violence involved an element of opportunism, whereby perpetrators used characteristics of the festival environment to commit or excuse acts of sexual violence, and to avoid detection, apprehension or formal intervention. For example, it was common for victim-survivor reports to involve a male perpetrator using the crowding and closeness of the moshpit area to grope or rub up against them. Participants also raised concerns about isolated spaces within festival grounds, such as camping areas.

Policing

Policing, broadly defined as a set of practices that aim to aim to preserve social order through surveillance and threat of sanction, was another key theme to emerge from the interview data as critical to victim-survivor experiences of sexual violence, and their general perception of safety at music festivals. Thematically, policing referenced the action of not only the state police, but also the work of private security, festival staff, volunteers and other patrons. While many victim-survivors were critical of each of these groups in various examples, they also spoke to the need for improvement in the service delivered by them. For example, while it was commonly noted that police and security did add to perceptions of safety, their approach detracted from the likelihood that victim-survivors would report incidents of sexual harassment or assault. Illustrative of this point, multiple participants reported that they felt police were not generally supportive of festival patrons and took a 'law and order' approach (mainly expressed through high visibility, enforcement operations relating to drug use and possession). As a result, participants felt that police were there to stop drugs entering the festival and to intervene in overt anti-social behaviour (e.g., physical violence), but were not concerned with participant safety and well-being beyond this. The zero-tolerance approach taken to policing of drugs resulted in some participants feeling that the police were not 'there for' them, and that this approach created an 'us versus them' mentality.

Notably, some participants reported negative experiences when they reported incidents of sexual violence to police, security or other festival staff. This included receiving overtly victim-blaming or dismissive responses, police incident reports going missing, and a lack of clarity regarding the correct processes to follow when a report was made. In some instances, security staff were identified as the perpetrators of sexual harassment. While some participants reported more supportive responses from festival management, there was often a lack of closure or follow-up post-report. For example, several participants failed to receive follow-up contact from festivals after reporting an incident. That said, a small number of participants reported receiving or being involved in delivering excellent responses in the wake of an incident, such as a perpetrator being ejected or banned from the festival, reporting to police, and making extensive changes to festival policy and practice.

However, most interview participants did not formally report their experiences to anyone. There was a range of complex reasons for this. Certainly, a lack of trust in security or police was one influential factor. Participants also had pragmatic concerns. For example, perpetrators could not always be identified in crowded spaces. Numerous participants commented that by the time they located security or police and returned to the area where the incident occurred the perpetrator would have gone. Some incidents, particularly sexual harassment, were seen as too 'trivial' to report, particularly in light of the aforementioned challenges. Others felt that little would be done if they reported, particularly given that festivals appear to lack clear policies or guidelines in terms of consequences for perpetrators.

Festival management and policy

On the whole, interview participants were dissatisfied with current festival responses to sexual violence, and felt that festivals could be taking further steps to prevent sexual violence from occurring, and to improve responses when it did occur. That said, participants also acknowledged the challenging environment of festivals, and some of the difficulties in responding effectively when dealing with large crowds. Participants recognised that music festivals do not exist in a vacuum, and the sexual violence that happens at festivals is directly informed by much broader social and cultural norms.

Some of the most common issues with festival management in relation to sexual violence included:

- Lack of clear communication to patrons about sexual violence (e.g., zero-tolerance messages, communicating consequences to perpetrators)

- Lack of clear protocols for responding to incidents

- Staff/volunteers/police being unsure of how to respond when incidents are reported

- Lack of training for staff in responding to sexual violence

- Low visibility of police, security and festival staff

- Insufficient numbers of police, security and festival staff employed

- A lack of flexible reporting options, such as textlines/hotlines

- A lack of response to incidents reported through textlines/hotlines where these were available

- Festivals seen to overtly encourage sexually objectifying behaviours and attitudes

- 'Outsourcing' the prevention of sexual violence to potential victims

Recommendations

Festival policy and management:

1. Clearer protocols and more clear and consistent messaging:
   - Festivals should develop clear policies and response protocols for sexual violence. Ideally, these should be developed with input from specialist sexual violence services and other experts.
   - Code of conduct to be reinforced at first point of contact (ticketing/ programs), in lead up to events (website, media), and most explicitly and clearly throughout event (advertising, bands, posters etc).
   - Ensure that consequences for perpetrators are outlined in these communications, and consistently enforced
   - Ensure that sexual violence campaigns follow best practice protocols, and contain clear and explicit messaging.
2. Introduce more female police and security staff working on-site.
3. Develop multiple avenues for reporting, including:
   - A functional report hotline with adequate resourcing to follow through in full service provision, including follow-up with victim-survivors.
   - Trained security personnel and police.
   - Trained crisis counsellors and medical staff.
   - Streamlined process for reporting/ action with all staff and personnel briefed to ensure consistent and smooth experience.
   - Ensure that contact points are highly visible and/or accessible.
   - Staff responsible for responding to disclosures should receive training from a specialist sexual assault service.
4. Festival management should consistently and systematically document all reported incidents of sexual violence.
5. Follow through on reports with feedback to victim-survivors.
6. Festivals should provide ready onsite access to support-services, such as medics and trained crisis counsellors. These services should be provided in safe, quiet, and private spaces.

Environment:

1. Provision of quiet 'chill out' and safe spaces.

2. Ensuring security and police are distributed throughout festival spaces, including regular patrols or emergency contact points in camping grounds

3. Introduce section markers or signposting in camping grounds to improve way finding.

4. Enhancing lighting, particularly in isolated areas such as camping grounds

5. Ensure signage establishing behavioural standards is clearly visible throughout all spaces at festival.

6. Introduce clear and consistently identifiable markers to note the location of security staff in and around performance spaces.

Cultural change:

1. Continued efforts to make line-ups more gender equitable and diverse

2. Encouragement of pro-social behaviour

   - Encourage bystander intervention when safe and appropriate

3. Encouragement of an ethic of care among festival patrons

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