**Implementation of recommendations from *Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities***

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| University name: RMIT University | | |
| Recommendation no. | Action already taken | Planned/future action |
| Recommendation 1  Vice-Chancellors should take direct responsibility for the implementation of these recommendations, including decision-making and monitoring and evaluation of actions taken.  To assist and advise them in this respect, Vice-Chancellors should have an advisory body within their institution which has responsibility for guiding the implementation of the recommendations made in this report. The advisory body should report directly to the Vice-Chancellor of each university and include representatives from:  • the university’s senior leadership  • the student body  • academic staff  • residential colleges affiliated with the university  • student services, such as: counselling services, medical services and campus security, and  • frontline sexual assault services.  The advisory body should be responsible for developing an action plan for the implementation of these recommendations. The development of an action plan should involve broad and extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders from the university community and, where relevant, the wider community. The advisory body should also seek independent expertise where relevant and draw on existing research and best practice.  The advisory body should assess and publicly report on the university’s progress towards implementation of these recommendations within 18 months | 1. RMIT has established the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Reducing Sexual Harm. With broad membership consistent with Recommendation 1, it meets quarterly to drive and monitor actions outlined in the strategic framework and annual plans to reduce gender-based violence, and to discuss and resolve issues. The Co-chairs of the Advisory Group also meet directly with the Vice-Chancellor every six months. 2. A three year framework for action is in place and this is supported by a detailed annual action plan. Both have been widely consulted on and are endorsed by the VC’s Advisory Group. RMIT’s 2017-2020 strategic framework ‘Changing the Course’ is published on [RMIT’s website.](https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/rmit-images/marketing-only/about/our-strategy/values/ChangingtheCoursePresentationFinal.pdf) 3. Progress is reported via RMIT’s website and via internal communications channels. RMIT reports progress publicly to the AHRC and other key stakeholders including the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). | 1. The Advisory Group will expand its terms of reference in 2020 to include all forms of gender-based violence, in recognition of the shared drivers of these behaviours. 2. Planning and action will continue to be dynamic and informed by context. Each year an annual plan will be revised and refreshed. 3. Development of a new strategic plan will be aligned with the university’s broader diversity and inclusion strategy. |
| Recommendation 2  Universities develop a plan for addressing the drivers of sexual assault and sexual harassment that:  • provides students and staff with education about: behaviours that constitute sexual assault and sexual harassment, consent and respectful relationships, ‘violence supportive attitudes’ and bystander intervention, and  • identifies existing resources and communications campaigns that reinforce key messages of education programs for dissemination to staff and students. Education programs and communications should:  • target all levels of the organisation – current and future students, staff, residential colleges, public transport to/ from university, sports clubs, student societies and student unions  • be based on best practice and research  • be developed and delivered by individuals and/or organisations with expertise in sexual violence prevention  • be developed in consultation with university students, and  • include measures for evaluating and refining the actions taken. | 1. Face to face education and e-learning modules for students and staff have been implemented on the following topics:  * Consent and respectful relationships (available to all students) * Sexual consent and respectful relationships workshop pilot delivered to international students * Bystander intervention (for student leaders and others) * Responding to disclosures of sexual harm (staff) * Respectful Research Training for staff in 2020 and early 2021  1. Student leaders including club members and executives are a particular focus for education. These education programs have been developed and delivered by individuals and/or organisations with expertise in sexual violence prevention. 2. RMIT’s annual communication and engagement campaign [Be the change](https://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/our-rmit/values/be-the-change)was designed in collaboration with students and has run each semester since 2018. The engagement campaign will continue to be refined with ongoing consultation across a variety of stakeholder groups, including students 3. A Staff-Student Relationships Commitment Statement was introduced, which replaced a previous Staff-Student Relationship Policy Process. This document acknowledges that power imbalances exist between staff and students and is in line with the Universities Australia ‘Principles of Respectful Supervisory Relationships’ document. 4. A survey designed to measure attitudes that drive sexual harm has been developed. The survey is informed by the National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women survey (NCAS) and will act as a measure of cultural change over time 5. Reviewed and refreshed Staff Conduct policy and procedure in consultation with key stakeholders including the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Reducing Sexual Harm. | 1. Respectful Research Training will be delivered to Higher Degree by Research students in 2021 2. Targeted delivery of the Universities Australia online training resource around the drivers of violence against women and responding to disclosures. This training was developed by Universities Australia with Our Watch, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, and several Centres Against Sexual Assault. 3. Based on participant feedback and other inputs, RMIT will continue to refine and improve the quality, and increase the level of participation in the following education programs:    1. Consent and respectful relationships (all students)    2. Bystander intervention (students and staff)    3. Responding to disclosures of sexual harm (all staff and student leaders)    4. Respectful research training (staff and students) 4. RMIT’s [Be the change](https://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/our-rmit/values/be-the-change)website and engagement campaign will continue to be refined and iterated with ongoing consultation with stakeholders, including students. 5. A student survey mechanism to measure attitudes that drive sexual harm will be implemented. The survey is derived from the National Community Attitudes towards violence against women survey (NCAS) and will act as a measure of cultural change over time. 6. Explore implementation of the evidence-based, whole-of-institution model developed by Universities Australia to prevent violence against women at and through universities. |
| Recommendation 3  In order to ensure students and staff know about support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment, universities should:  • widely disseminate information about university reporting avenues to staff and students  • widely disseminate information about internal and external services to staff and students, including: university counselling and medical services, campus security, local sexual assault services, police, medical centres, hospitals, counselling services and anti-discrimination agencies  • ensure that information about internal and external reporting procedures and support services is displayed clearly, in a logical place(s) on the university website  • ensure that information about internal and external reporting procedures and support services is provided to students as part of their orientation into university and to new staff as part of their human resources induction/ on-boarding  • ensure that information about internal and external reporting procedures and support services is accessible to all students and staff, including: people with disability, people from CALD backgrounds, and  • develop relationships with external services (local sexual assault service, local hospital) to enable referral of students to these services where necessary.  Universities should evaluate the activities undertaken to increase awareness of support services and reporting processes to ensure that these measures have been effective in increasing awareness among staff and students | 1. In line with recommendation two, whole-of-university communication campaigns were initiated and websites (staff, students and public websites) updated to ensure students and staff know how to report and gain support in relation to sexual harm. Communications and engagement metrics are reviewed, and key messages evaluated and iterated via student focus groups. 2. Print materials around key campaign messages (including how to respond to disclosures and seek support) have been provided to staff and targeted leadership groups each year. 3. RMIT Safer Community (student sexual harm intake point) team members attend student orientation events each semester in order to build student awareness of reporting processes and support services available 4. Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Harm e-learning module was launched in 2018 and has now been incorporated into staff onboarding processes. 5. In 2017, the University funded a CASA worker to support students on campus for a discrete period following the national survey result publication. CASA House has also provided specialist training expertise to RMIT, delivering face-to-face workshops from 2017 -2019 (COVID restrictions have prevented face to face training delivery in 2020). 6. Former students who have a grievance against the university relating to sexual harm have the opportunity to participate in a Restorative Engagement conference. 7. RMIT regularly reviews reporting and help seeking behaviour from students to evaluate whether there is increased awareness of support services. This data acts as a proxy indicator of community awareness levels, with a persistent upward trajectory of disclosures and reports from students indicating measures have been effective. 8. The student academic ‘at risk’ process documentation has been refreshed to enhance the focus on support for students impacted by sexual harm. | 1. In 2021 RMIT will expand the Safer Community service to provide direct support to staff disclosing sexual harm, aligning the response with the existing student facing approach. This will ensure a consistent single point of contact for all members of the RMIT community to disclose and seek support for sexual harm. 2. RMIT will continue to reinforce and refine messaging about the single point of contact for support and reporting through regular communications and attendance at key events including orientation. 3. RMIT will extend networks with relevant expert agencies and researchers with expertise in sexual violence prevention and continuously improve information about internal and external reporting procedures. |
| Recommendation 4  In order to ensure that actions taken by universities to prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment are appropriate, within a year of the release of this report, universities should commission an independent, expert led review of existing university policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment.  This review should assess the effectiveness of existing university policies and pathways and make specific recommendations to universities about best practice responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment.  In the interim, and at an institutional level, universities should draw on sexual violence counselling expertise to develop and review processes for responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment of students to ensure that they:  • secure the immediate safety and wellbeing of the individual who has experienced the sexual assault or sexual harassment  • are clear and accessible  • provide individuals with control over what happens to their report  • have the flexibility to suit individual circumstances  • provide students with support to continue with their studies  • provide specialist support, from someone who has specialist expertise and training in sexual assault, sexual harassment and trauma counselling of sexual assault survivors, and  • accommodate the needs of students from a diverse range of backgrounds. | 1. An independent review into university policies and pathways to respond to sexual harm was completed in 2018. 2. RMIT is in the process of addressing the recommendations and has published a summary of progress on its website. Actions to date include;  * A comprehensive student conduct policy and procedure review and redevelopment to ensure that the student discipline process adopts a trauma informed approach to sexual harm matters. * An audit of RMIT student clubs and societies, including scrutiny around reporting processes and training for sexual harm. * A centralised, skilled point of contact for sexual harm disclosures from staff and students will be enacted in 2021 * RMIT is in the process of securing a centralised technology platform for capturing and case managing sexual harm information and disclosures  1. RMIT processes for responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment of students have been developed to align with trauma informed practice. | 1. RMIT will continue to address the recommendations of the external review and communicate progress~~.~~ 2. RMIT will continue to review and refine response pathways to ensure they are responsive, comprehensive and support students to continue with their studies. 3. RMIT has developed an anonymous reporting portal and hotline as an additional mechanism for staff and students to report inappropriate behaviours and conduct, in addition to implementing a new university wide complaints portal. |
| Recommendation 5  Universities should conduct an assessment to identify staff members and student representatives within their institution most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Universities should ensure that these staff members and student representatives receive training in responding to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment, delivered by an organisation with specialist expertise in this area | Assessment and identification of staff and student groups most likely to receive disclosures has been undertaken on a continuing basis. Targeted training has been delivered to key groups including;   * Responding to Disclosures e-learning module for all RMIT staff (with specific exemption for those for whom it may trigger distress) * Face to face workshops on responding to disclosures delivered by CASA (the Centre Against Sexual Assault) House to staff including those involved in frontline support and student discipline roles. * Bystander intervention training for students in clubs, societies, mentoring and leadership roles * counselling staff (tailored professional development) * Respectful Research Training for Research supervisors * Specialist training for Vice-Chancellor and his executive in responding to sexual assault and Restorative Engagement conferencing. | 1. A gender-based violence community capability framework will be developed and used to ensure future training initiatives are targeted at and delivered to appropriate groups. 2. Targeted training programs will be embedded into an RMIT student leadership framework in order to continually drive specialist training of society and club officials, mentors and other student leaders. 3. Staff completion of the ‘responding to disclosure’ e-learning module will be monitored. |
| Recommendation 6  Universities should ensure that information about individual disclosures and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment is collected and stored confidentially and used for continuous improvement of processes, including:  • details of the complaint/incident  • steps taken to respond to the complaint/incident, i.e.: whether the individual reported to police, whether the perpetrator was moved to a different lecture/tutorial  • support or assistance received, i.e.: whether the person received counselling from university services, whether they reported to police, whether they received support from an external sexual assault service  • time taken to respond to the report and/or refer the person to support services, and  • any feedback provided by the complainant/respondent in relation to the process. Access to this information should be limited to staff members with responsibility for responding to disclosures and reports and those responsible for improving university responses to disclosures and reports.  On a regular basis – at least every six months – Vice-Chancellors should be provided with de-identified reports of this data, including any trends or identifiable concerns which arise, along with recommendations for any necessary improvements to processes. | 1. Information about individual disclosures and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment is collected and stored confidentially and used for process improvement. Insights and data analysis continue to inform both the development and evolution of annual action plans in service of RMIT’s broader ‘Changing the Course’ three-year framework. 2. Data is provided to the Vice-Chancellor as part of an ongoing and embedded reporting process. | 1. RMIT will continue to improve the quality and completeness of data collection and reporting. |
| Recommendation 7  Within six months of this report, but as soon as possible, universities should conduct an audit of university counselling services to assess:  • the capacity of university counselling services to respond to students’ requests for counselling in an appropriately timely manner, and  • how many university counselling staff have received training in working with sexual assault survivors.  As part of this audit, universities should collect data on:  • the average length of time students are required to wait to see a university counsellor, and  • the number of urgent/crisis requests for counselling received.  This data should be assessed to determine whether additional counselling services are required to meet the urgent needs of students who have experienced sexual assault or harassment. If additional counselling services are required, universities should ensure that these additional resources are in place as soon as practicable. | 1. An audit of university counselling support was completed within six months of the AHRC report. The audit outcome was reported to the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Reducing Sexual Harm. 2. In addressing the points called out in Recommendation 7;  * Students who have experienced sexual harm are prioritized for appointments with RMIT counsellors * Specialist professional development for student counsellors has been delivered by CASA House. * Audit results indicated appropriate and timely counselling service levels * In 2017 the University funded an on-campus CASA worker to support students. | RMIT will continue to monitor availability of counselling to ensure that resources and expertise are sufficient to ensure a timely response to need for counselling. |
| Recommendation 8  Universities should engage an independent body to conduct the National university student survey of sexual assault and sexual harassment at three yearly intervals to track progress in reducing the prevalence of these incidents at a sector wide level. | Universities Australia has commissioned the survey on behalf of all Australian universities. | N/A |
| Recommendation 9  In addition to considering the implementation of the university recommendations made in this report, residential colleges and university residences should commission an independent, expert-led review of the factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in their settings. This review should consider:  • appropriate responses by a college or university residence to reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment  • a trauma-informed and rights-based approach in a situation in which an allegation of sexual assault has been made  • the ways that hazing practices and college ‘traditions’ facilitate a culture which may increase the likelihood of sexual violence  • the role of alcohol in facilitating a culture which may increase the likelihood of sexual violence  • the level and nature of supervision in a twenty-four hour residential setting in which large numbers of young people are living away from home, and  • the level and adequacy of training required to equip residential advisors to serve as first responders or in response to matters of sexual assault and harassment. | 1. An independent review was completed in 2018 around the 368 bed Walert House university residence on the RMIT Bundoora campus. RMIT is not associated with any student residential colleges in Victoria. 2. RMIT was commended on the respectful culture of Walert House and the work to ensure training was in place for staff on responding to disclosure and student residents were aware of how to seek support and report. 3. An RMIT Alcohol policy was finalised with scope that includes RMIT’s 368 bed student residence, Walert House. | 1. RMIT will continue to work closely with Walert House to encourage help seeking behaviour, robust and trauma informed responses to disclosures and an ongoing culture of respect. |