



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

23 September 2020

Ms Kate Jenkins
Sex Discrimination Commissioner
sexdiscriminationcommissioner@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

Thank you for your correspondence regarding an update on the *Change the Course* report recommendations. The University of Wollongong (UOW) remains committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all members of our community and has undertaken significant measures to prevent and address sexual assault and sexual harassment. UOW has implemented all of the *Change the Course* report recommendations. We update our progress against the recommendations on our website.

Since 2017 the UOW Safe and Respectful Communities Advisory Group, led by Senior Executive staff, has advised me on the development, implementation, reporting and evaluation of initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Advisory Group is supported by the UOW Safe and Respectful Communities Working Party which is responsible for implementing the current UOW [Safe and Respectful Communities Action Plan](#) (Action Plan). The Action Plan details the current and future work being done at UOW to ensure members of the University community can work and study in an environment that is free from harassment, assault and intimidation.

We are pleased with the work we have undertaken in this space, as an institution and as part of the Australian tertiary education sector. We also remain committed to continuing our work to address sexual assault and sexual harassment within our community and to creating positive change.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wellings', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Paul Wellings CBE
Vice-Chancellor

Encl

Professor Paul Wellings CBE
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

SARC
Action Plan
2019 – 20

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Executive Summary

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is committed to ensuring all members of the University community work and study in an environment that is safe and free from intimidation and harassment. The University of Wollongong, Safe and Respectful Communities Action Plan (Action Plan) is the mechanism by which UOW will work towards this goal.

The Action Plan is UOW's response to the Vice-Chancellor's endorsed recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Report Change the Course National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian universities 2017, Universities Australia 10-Point Action Plan and TEQSA Guidance Note: Wellbeing and Safety

In accordance with Recommendation 1 'Change the Course' Report, UOW formally constituted the Safe and Respectful Communities (SARC) Advisory Group (Advisory Group). The Advisory Group advises UOW's Vice-Chancellor on the development, implementation, reporting and evaluation of initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment as well as general safety of staff, students and affiliates which occurs during the course of University activities. The Advisory Group is supported by UOW's Safe and Respectful Communities Working Party (Working Party). The Working Party has responsibility for developing and implementing the Vice-Chancellor approved recommendations of the Advisory Group. The Action Plan outlines the range of initiatives UOW will implement including:

1. UOW's prevention and response framework to sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurs during the course of University activities.

2. relevant standards and guidelines in the Higher Education Standards Framework that are directly concerned with student wellbeing and safety and encompass avenues of support for students, availability of general and cohort-specific support and advice services, promotion and provision of a safe environment and timely and appropriate management of critical incidents.

The draft Action Plan underwent significant and broad consultation through a variety of channels including articles in 'Universe', the UOW staff newsletter, prominent presence on the UOW Current Students page, updates on the SARC website and extensive consultation through Accommodation Services with staff and students. SARC members also presented the Action Plan to all faculties, divisions and external stakeholders during the consultation period. Open staff and student forums were held at the Wollongong campus.

The Action Plan is endorsed by the SARC Advisory Group and the SARC Working Party to be confirmed following SARCAG. The Plan addresses the recommendations of the AHRC Report and is structured into five themes:

- Leadership and Culture
- Governance
- Training
- Services
- Reporting, Reviews and Audits



“

I'd like to take the time to thank everyone in the UOW community who have contributed to the development of this Action Plan – the SARC Working Party and the Advisory Group. This is an extremely important piece of work for our University”.

“Having the Respect Is installation as part of our ongoing campaign to prevent and address sexual assault and harassment, was a visual and important way for our community to share what respect means to them. I enjoyed reading the range of voices, with a broad variety of thoughts about respect based on people's interests.”

Professor Paul Wellings CBE
Vice-Chancellor

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Background

The University of Wollongong (UOW) has participated in a sector-wide campaign to increase awareness and enhance prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities. The Respect. Now. Always (RNA) campaign was launched in February 2016, instigated by Universities Australia (UA) in collaboration with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). As part of the campaign, UA commissioned the AHRC to survey Australian university students on the nature, prevalence, and reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

In late 2016, Australian university students, including UOW students, were invited to participate in a prevalence survey about student experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The survey was rolled out to all universities from September to November 2016 and the AHRC also invited submissions on its website. The survey results and submissions provided the basis for the AHRC's National Report, Change the Course National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities 2017 (Change the Course Report).

The AHRC released the Change the Course Report on 1 August 2017. It contained the collated survey results of all universities. UOW (along with 39 other Australian universities) publicly released its institutional survey data in conjunction with the Change the Course Report as part of a commitment to our students regarding transparency and openness. UA also released a 10 Point Action Plan on the same day.

A whole of institution UOW Respect. Now. Always (RNA) Working Group was set up early in 2017 guided by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). It was formed to review current services, implement

additional initiatives, implement prevention strategies, and prepare for the release of the Report.

UOW is committed to implementing all of the recommendations in the AHRC's Change the Course Report and to embedding a sustained, long term response to student wellbeing and safety. Recommendation 1 in the Change the Course Report is that Universities convene an advisory body to provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor and to oversee the development and implementation of an action plan.

In December 2017, the inaugural UOW Safe and Respectful Communities (SARC) Advisory Group met to advise UOW's Vice-Chancellor on the development, implementation, reporting and evaluation of initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment of staff, students and affiliates which occurs during the course of University activities. The Advisory Group is supported by UOW's SARC Working Party. The Working Party has responsibility for implementing the Vice-Chancellor approved recommendations of the Advisory Group. The Action Plan outlines the range of initiatives UOW will implement including:

1. UOW's prevention and response framework to sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurs during the course of University activities.
2. relevant standards and guidelines in the Higher Education Standards Framework that are directly concerned with student wellbeing and safety and encompass avenues of support for students, availability of general and cohort-specific support and advice services, promotion and provision of a safe environment and timely and appropriate management of critical incidents.



Consultation

The draft 'Action Plan' underwent widespread and broad consultation from 23 July to August, 2018. A schedule of the consultation is provided at appendix A.

The draft Action Plan underwent significant and broad consultation through a variety of channels including articles in 'Universe', the UOW staff newsletter, prominent presence on the UOW Current Students page, updates on the SARC website and extensive consultation through Accommodation Services with staff and students. SARC members also presented the Action Plan to all faculties, divisions and external stakeholders during the consultation period. Open staff and student forums were held at the Wollongong campus.

In total 69 faculties, schools, divisions and units were consulted throughout this phase. All seven accommodation service sites were consulted with around 150 residents attending SARC draft

Action Plan fora. Thirteen external stakeholders including NSW Police, Wollongong City Council and the Violence, Abuse and Neglect (VAN) Service were also consulted.

Feedback to the draft Action Plan was invited through a variety of methods including written submissions to Safe and Respectful Communities (SARC) Manager, online SARC feedback form and/or in person to members of the SARC Working Party.

The feedback was collated and a high level presentation was provided to the SARC Advisory Group and SARC Working Party. This feedback has now been reviewed and incorporated into the final SARC Action Plan.

Alignment with UOW Strategic Plan

The Action Plan aligns to UOW's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 through:

GOAL 2:

Providing an exceptional learning and student experience (2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

GOAL 3:

Transforming the workplace (3.1) and

GOAL 5:

Sustaining a world class university (5.3)

Objectives

The objectives of UOW's Action Plan are to:

- Establish and maintain a governance structure to oversee the development and implementation of strategies that prevent, address and enhance student safety including sexual assault and sexual harassment. The governance structure will include ensuring policies and procedures align with best practice in response to sexual assault and sexual harassment.
- Enhance the culture of respect and provision of a safe environment that exists across the University to ensure that staff and student conduct is of the highest standard.
- Educate staff and students about behaviours that constitute sexual assault and sexual harassment, consent and respectful relationships, bystander intervention, appropriate responses to disclosures and drug and alcohol prevention education programs.
- Provide support for students and ensure systems and processes enable response to incidents and prevent recurrences.
- Ensure staff and students know about available support services and reporting processes.
- Ensure support services offered reflect the needs of student cohorts.
- Build on the evidence base to track the effectiveness and appropriateness of the actions implemented through this Action Plan.
- Take a whole of institution approach to student safety and wellbeing including UOW campuses based in Australia, UOW College and UOW Pulse. This will include the sharing of information to UOW Global Enterprises for consideration of use in overseas campuses.
- Work with the community and partners to demonstrate leadership in preventing and addressing sexual assault by delivering attitudinal and behavioural change education programs.

The objectives of the Action Plan are aligned to the AHRC Recommendations and relevant standards and guidelines in the Higher Education Standards Framework.



1. Leadership and Culture

ITEM	ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME
1.1	The Vice-Chancellor leads the SARC initiative, including communications with students and staff, monitors its progress through the SARC Advisory Group and reports this progress to UOW Council.	Vice-Chancellor	The Vice-Chancellor takes direct responsibility for the implementation of the SARC initiative, including decision-making monitoring, and evaluation of actions taken.	Ongoing
1.2	Refresh and revise SARC communication strategy, utilising relevant communication channels to tailor messages to different cohorts.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	Increased awareness of support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment.	Q4 2018 Ongoing
1.3	Develop a UOW Health, Safety and Wellness Strategy based on best practice that includes Students as Partners.*	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer	Enhanced student wellbeing and safety.	Q1 2020
1.4	Develop a staff strategy that integrates Safe and Respectful Communities into recruitment, induction, performance reviews of staff and other staff programs.	Chief Administrative Officer	Staff processes align and reinforce respect as a core value of UOW. To acknowledge and adhere to the principles of Safe and Respectful Communities at UOW.	Q2 2019
1.5	Consider initiatives such as "Safe Night Out" and "White Ribbon Accreditation" for all UOW Australian campuses in partnership with external agencies.	Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	Community wide initiatives around respect and safety are considered. Whole of institution approach to SARC activities.	Q4 2019
1.6	Enhance Work Integrated Learning environments through provision of information and obligations for students, academic supervisors, placement coordinators, placement supervisors and host organisations highlighting UOW's SARC objectives.	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Work Integrated Learning materials align and reinforce respect as a core value.	Q1 2019
1.7	Develop a program of campaigns addressing safe and respectful communities in partnership with external agencies inclusive of international and LGBTIQ+ students.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	Widely disseminate information about internal and external services for students and staff to increase awareness of support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment.	Q1 2019
1.8	Engage with Student Advisory Council, student leaders and representatives to support activities that promote SARC.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer	Students are actively represented in formulating an institutional approach to SARC.	Q4 2018 Ongoing
1.9	Integrate Safe and Respectful Communities into communications with prospective students through delivery of the NSW Department of Education's Year 11 Crossroads program.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic)	Prospective students have increased awareness of UOW's support for sexual assault or sexual harassment.	Q3 2018 Ongoing

2. Governance

ITEM	ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME
2.1	Conduct and implement recommendations of an independent, expert led review of existing university policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment.	Chief Administrative Officer	Policies are accessible to staff and students and reflect best practice. Policies are coherent, consistent and reinforce processes and practices.	Q4 2019
2.2	Review and update the UOW Student Charter and Student Conduct Rules.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic)	Student Charter and Conduct Rules align and reinforce respect as a core value.	Q3 2019
2.3	Enhance the SARC governance framework to support best practice in preventing and managing sexual assault and harassment at UOW.	Vice-Chancellor Chief Administrative Officer	SARC Advisory Group advises the Vice-Chancellor on the development, implementation, reporting and evaluation of initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment.	Ongoing

3. Training

ITEM	ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME
3.1	Continue to develop staff training programs such as First Responder Training, Bystander Awareness training, Responsibilities, Rights and Respect, and healthy relationships training through workshop and online channels embedding evaluation and feedback.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Research) Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	Staff have increased awareness of support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment. Staff members most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment are well trained.	Q4 2019 Ongoing
3.2	Continue to develop, implement and evaluate training and awareness programs for students (e.g. RRR, Consent Matters, Residential Leaders training, Bystander Awareness Training, MATES program, First level responders training).	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	Students have increased awareness of support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment. Student representatives most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment are well trained.	Q4 2019 Ongoing
3.3	Engage students and staff in a debate regarding mandating training for students to inform UOW policy on mandatory training for students.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer SARC Working Party	A position on mandatory training for students is reached.	Q4 2019
3.4	Continue to develop, implement and evaluate training and awareness programs for students in UOW Residences (e.g alcohol awareness programs, Consent matters).	Chief Administrative Officer	Provide an environment of wellbeing and safety.	Q1 2019 Ongoing

* A collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular, pedagogical or other University frameworks through conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation or analysis.

4. Services

ITEM	ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME
4.1	Implement and continually improve support programs for those impacted by sexual assault and/or sexual harassment.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) SARC Working Party	Victims of sexual assault or harassment have knowledge of and access to multiple levels of support.	Q1 2019 Ongoing
4.2	Implement and evaluate the Sexual Assault support model including 1300 SASH Hotline for confidential disclosure; Single Point of Contact providing a coordinated institutional response (trauma skilled support and investigation).	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer	Victims of sexual assault or harassment have knowledge of and access to multiple levels of support.	Q1 2019 Ongoing
4.3	Implement recommendations from the 2018 Review of Counselling services.	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	UOW's Counselling Services are enhanced based on best practice evidence.	Q3 2019

5. Reporting, Reviews and Audits

ITEM	ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME
5.1	Conduct and implement relevant recommendations from an independent, expert led review of the factors that contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in university accommodation services.	Chief Administrative Officer	Recommendations for improvement from the review are implemented.	Q4 2019
5.2	Implement complaint and report management across internal faculties, divisions and entities working towards a central repository of information.	Chief Administrative Officer	Reporting is streamlined and captures all incidents.	Q1 2019
5.3	Review safe practices in teaching programs where disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment are more likely to occur or where teaching experiences could trigger trauma.	Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) Chief Administrative Officer	Respect, gender and sexualities are embedded as a core value with UOW curriculum.	Q4 2019
5.4	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.	Chief Administrative Officer	Areas of strength and recommendations for improvement from the survey are implemented.	Q4 2019 Ongoing

Appendix A – Consultation

The draft Action Plan underwent a widespread consultation phase commencing 23rd of July to the 17 August, 2018. This date was extended to ensure internal and stakeholders had an opportunity to review the document and provide relevant feedback. Below is a schedule of the consultation period.

Draft Action Plan Consultation

The Draft Action Plan was open for consultation until: **10 August, 2018**

Consultation will occur via the following mechanisms:

CONSULTATION MECHANISMS	DUE DATE
<p>Written Submissions to sarca-uow@uow.edu.au</p> <p>Written submissions by students, staff and interested stakeholders will be welcomed via this mailing address.</p>	By 3 August 2018
<p>Faculty and Divisional Briefings</p> <p>All internal units of the University are encouraged to engage with and provide feedback on the Draft Action Plan. This will include subsidiaries of the University (e.g. UOW College, UOW Pulse)</p> <p>An information pack (including presentation slides) has been prepared for briefings. Members of the SARC Working Party will be engaging with Divisions and faculties to receive feedback.</p>	By 31 July 2018
<p>External Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>External key stakeholders will be engaged to provide feedback on the Draft Action Plan. Agencies will be drawn from members of the SARC Working Party.</p>	By 3 August 2018
<p>Information Sessions and Focus Groups (students and staff)</p> <p>Drop in sessions will be facilitated (including teleconference capabilities for individuals not on the Wollongong campus) for students and staff to learn more about the Draft Action Plan as well as provide input.</p>	Week of 23 July, 30 July, 6 August 2018
<p>End of Consultation</p>	10 August 2018



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