Response to *Change the Course*

Recommendations 1–9

Update: 25 September 2020

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

| **University name: Victoria University, Melbourne** | | |
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| **Recommendation no.** | **Action already taken** | **Planned/future action** |
| **1**  **(Leadership and governance)** | In August 2016, the Vice-Chancellor and President of Victoria University, Professor Peter Dawkins, launched the [Prevention of Violence Against Women Ten Point Plan](https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/student-services/pdfs/preventing-violence-against-women-ten-point-plan.pdf). The Plan and its governance structure in its entirety align with Recommendation 1 of the Change the Course report, as they outline a university-wide program of governance, leadership, community linkage and education in the prevention of violence against women.  The Respect and Responsibility program was set up and funded to give effect to this Plan and is now responsible for reporting against the Change the Course recommendations.  Specific actions taken by the University that address Recommendation 1 include:   * In 2016, a Reference Group was convened to support the establishment of the Respect and Responsibility, Preventing Violence Against Women 2016-2019 Ten Point Plan. The reference group included: senior leaders from the University; academic experts in gender equality and violence prevention initiatives from both VU and other universities; experts in the field of PVAW education; the heads of Security, Safer Community, Counselling, Legal Services, Student Services and People and Culture at VU; the VUSU Women’s Officer; representatives from the NTEU and Victorian Trades Hall Council; and a representative from Victoria Police. * In May 2016, the Vice-Chancellor launched the Respect. Now. Always. campaign at Victoria University with the President of VUSU and the Chief Operating Officer of the University. About 50 staff and students attended. The launch was followed by a series of screenings of the documentary *The Hunting Ground*, followed by panel discussions involving University and community leaders. Approximately 150 staff, students and community members attended these forums. * In August 2016, the Ten Point Plan was launched and publicised throughout the University by the Vice-Chancellor and senior leadership. * In 2017, a Staff Steering Group and a Student Committee were established and convened by the Senior Program Manager, Respect and Responsibility to provide implementation oversight and support. * The University’s Gender Equity Committee was established in 2016. It is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and meets quarterly. The Senior Program Manager, Respect and Responsibility is a member of the committee, and implementation status reports from Respect and Responsibility are standing agenda items for the committee. * Respect and Responsibility status implementation reports are presented annually to Academic Board and the University Council’s Committee of Audit and Risk. * Recurrent funding has been made available by the University for the staff and activities of the Respect and Responsibility program, including in 2018 the employment of an additional staff member within the program, made permanent in 2019. * The University’s leadership in this space has been recognised by the inclusion of Victoria University in significant community partnerships in the western suburbs of Melbourne, including the Preventing Violence Together 2030 Strategy implementation committee and Executive Governing Group, as well as by Victorian government grants of funding. * The University has continued to utilise the robust structures already established, and pursued and deepened co-design and consultation opportunities with students to develop new initiatives. | Please refer to VU’s [Building Respectful Futures Together Preventing Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2020—2023](https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/vu-respect-responsibility-strategy-2020_0.pdf) pp.8--9 for VU’s commitments in the area of leadership and governance over the next 3 years. |
| **2**  **(Changing attitudes and behaviours)** | Victoria University, through the Respect and Responsibility program, has embarked on an ambitious plan of education, resource development and leadership in the primary prevention of violence against women, through addressing the drivers of sexual assault and sexual harassment.  Specific actions taken between 2017 and 2020 that have addressed Recommendation 2 include:   * Establishment and maintenance of a Student Reference Group for Gender Equality to support implementation of the University’s strategy and develop leadership within the student body on this issue. * Formation of partnerships with organisations in the western suburbs of Melbourne who also work in primary prevention. Highlights include:   + Partnering with AMES Australia to develop the inaugural Preventing Violence Against Women Leadership Program. Graduates included five VU students and staff. This program provides participants with the knowledge and skills required to become leaders in Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The program has continued in 2018, with VU involvement. Importantly, Victoria University has nurtured the 2017 graduates as they take action to emerge as PVAW leaders within their communities.   + Participation in Women’s Health West 16 Days Activist Challenge, as part of the University’s inaugural participation in the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence every year since 2017.   + Active participation in the regional partnership Preventing Violence Together 2030 strategy implementation committee and Executive Governance Group.   + Supporting the HealthWest Partnership to receive a grant of $140,000 from the Victorian government Free from Violence Fund to work with male VU students and staff to become allies for gender equality and to prevent violence against women. This groundbreaking initiative was led by a VU academic and has resulted in the innovative sector resource [Working Together With Men](https://wtwm-healthwest.nationbuilder.com/). * Partnering with and supporting student initiatives in promoting gender equality and primary prevention, including:   + The Victoria University Student Union (VUSU)-hosted International Women’s Day 2017 event that focused on the impact of violence against women with an intersectional cultural lens. Over 50 students and staff attended.   + Funding of a student- and staff-painted mural at the University’s main campus, in partnership with VUSU, on the theme of “Reclaiming our spaces, reclaiming our voices” for International Women’s Day 2018.   + The Victoria University Postgraduate Association (VUPA)-hosted International Women’s Day event focused on Gender Equity. Presenters included VU Alumni and industry representatives. The event was attended by over 30 staff and students and was streamed live on Facebook, with 293 views.   + Collaborating with the VU student social media team to create an International Women’s Day video, focusing on gender equality, with the theme ***Be Bold For Change***. This video has had 4,742 views and has been shared across the community including by external organisations and by VU clubs, students and staff pages <https://www.facebook.com/victoria.university/videos/1226203530781299/>   + ‘Love Shouldn’t Hurt’ – an event hosted by Victoria University Polytechnic students. The forum focused on raising awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault and provided information and resources for staff and community members experiencing domestic violence.   + The Respect and Responsibility Student Engagement Officer hosted a guest lecture for community development students at Victoria University Polytechnic.   + Supporting the Student Union to localise and promote the [Be a Better Human](https://vustudentunion.com/babh) campaign and resources.   + Speaking and mentoring at student-led conferences and events including CISA Tea Time, Future Female and CISA Sexual Health conference, International Women’s Day.   + Supporting and promoting a student-run arts-based violence prevention group, [Break Boundaries](https://au.linkedin.com/company/break-boundaries).   + Contributing content and sponsorship to student publications, focused on gender equality and violence prevention. * Development of two award-winning eLearning modules, co-designed by students:   + A $50,000 Victorian government Community Partnership Grant was awarded to the Respect and Responsibility Unit, in partnership with VUSU, in recognition of the University’s leadership in primary prevention initiatives, to design and develop an e-learning resource on the topic of Bystander Awareness and Action.   + A student engagement officer (student-as-staff) was engaged to work with a reference group of students to guide the development of this resource.   + The [Bystander e-learning module](https://youtu.be/uqnJ6nA4PEM) was piloted with students and staff during Semester 2, 2018, and the module then formed part of a randomised controlled trial study into the impact of behavioural interventions on pro-social bystander behaviour, undertaken by Behavioural Insights Team with support from VicHealth.   + A [Consent and Respectful Relationships](https://youtu.be/7Gfcj1Koy_Q) e-learning module was co-produced with students during 2019. The resource includes multiple scaffolded scenarios, all drawn from students’ lived experiences, that unpack the concepts of respect, privilege and consent.   + The e-learning resources have won four LearnX awards and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students. They are available to all enrolled students at VU and are mandatory for student leaders. * Development of information and collateral for students, including   + Dedicating the back cover of the Student Diary every year since 2017 to the Respect and Responsibility message, including contact points for safety and reporting. This message is reinforced within the diaries.   + A multimedia/postcard messaging series in several community languages developed by VU graduates of the AMES leadership course.   + A postcard series with key messaging on supporting a friend/teammate/classmate who has experienced sexual assault or harassment. More than 5000 of these postcards have been distributed to date, and the information is also available online. * Development of training programs for student leaders, including:   + A pilot program to evaluate a Prevention of Violence Against Women 101 education and training program. Modules included Gender Equality, Respectful Relationships and Bystander awareness training. The program was endorsed by student leaders and was included in student orientation in 2018.   + In collaboration with the College of Sport and Exercise Science, National Tertiary Students Games participants and supporting staff were engaged in a learning program to increase their awareness of, sexual violence, consent and bystander action. Information handbooks and procedures for reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment were revised and updated to focus first on the person experiencing sexual assault rather than incident management.   + Training for student leaders and representatives assessed as more likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment has been incorporated into the regular/mandatory training programs for these cohorts. Training is delivered by an experienced sexual assault counsellor. * Students attending the University’s Harmony Day events were engaged in a PVAW awareness forum. * Provision of and participation in activities during Women in Higher Education Week each August, in conjunction with VUSU and other sections of the University, including:   + In 2017, a Respectful Relationships seminar that was attended by students and staff. The seminar aimed to increase awareness of what constitutes a respectful relationship, the preventable nature of violence against women, and understanding how to take bystander action in a range of settings.   + Sponsoring a lunch forum organised by the student Women’s Collective.   + In 2018, co-sponsoring and promoting a seminar with the Law Students’ Society on non-traditional careers for women.   + In 2019, Respect and Responsibility partnered with VU academic Dr Natalie Kon-yu, the Student Union, the Postgraduate Association and the NTEU to launch the book #MeToo: Stories from the Australian movement at an [event](https://www.facebook.com/VUstudentunion/posts/10156794475084317) attended by more than 100 students, staff and community members. * Leading Victoria University’s participation in the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence every year since 2017, including:   + Facilitating the involvement of VU students and staff in Women’s Health West’s 16 Days Activist Challenge. VU participants consistently make up around 15% of total participants in the challenge, which is promoted across the western suburbs of Melbourne.   + Forming a VU contingent (the only University to do so) in the city Walk to End Family Violence   + Convening annual Vice-Chancellor’s Leadership events on the theme of Preventing Violence Together, that bring community and university leaders together with local violence prevention practitioners to renew commitment and share stories.   + Co-sponsoring Women’s Financial Empowerment seminars on two VU campuses, and a forum amplifying the voices of Aboriginal women of Melbourne’s west.   + Facilitating two significant community art projects and exhibitions, which involved local men and women in creating textile arts with a message of anti-violence and respect. A ‘flash mob’ singing event at the local railways station took place in 2018 and involved around 30 students and staff. * Provision of and participation in activities during the week of International Women’s Day, including:   + Funding and organising a staff- and student-painted mural at the University’s main campus in Footscray in 2018, on the theme of “Reclaiming our Spaces, Reclaiming our Voices”   + Participation in the city IWD march in a VU contingent   + Supporting and publicising student union, women’s collective, staff and alumni IWD events.   + Supporting a panel discussion organised by the Women In Science and Engineering student club   + Co-sponsoring a community screening of film *Hidden Figures* at the University’s Metro West campus.   + Organising a ‘flash mob’ choral happening and co-sponsoring film events for IWD in 2019.   + Speaking on a panel at the Student Union IWD soiree in 2020. * Delivery of the ‘You the Man’ innovative theatre education program to students in 2019. | Please refer to VU’s [Building Respectful Futures Together Preventing Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2020—2023](https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/vu-respect-responsibility-strategy-2020_0.pdf) pp.10—13 for VU’s commitments in the areas of training, transformation, partnerships and community engagement over the next 3 years. |
| **3**  **(University responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment)** | Victoria University has expended significant effort and staff resources into developing and publicising information about support services for students and staff who have experienced sexual assault or harassment, and ensuring that these services are adequately resourced.  Specific actions taken by the University in response to Recommendation 3 include:   * Using the global communication systems, including social media channels, and the Student Diary to prominently advertise information about support and response services, both on and off campus, to all students * Using People and Culture’s staff induction and online training system to underline the University’s zero tolerance of violence, discrimination and harassment to all new staff, and staff scheduled for refresher course. * Using the global email and announcement systems, to prominently advertise information about support and response services, both on and off campus, to all staff. * Developing a well-regarded phone app, VU SAFE, which enables instant emergency calls to university security or the police, as well as allowing users to book a security escort, access maps and support services information, report concerning behaviour and enable a “Friend Walk”, ie give location access to a friend to track a user’s progress home in real time. There have been more than 5,000 downloads of the VU SAFE app to date. * Prominent presence of Safer Community and Security at all major University events including enrolment, Orientation Festivals, Family Day and Open Days. * Inauguration of monthly lunchtime lectures for frontline staff on issues relating to Safer Communities, such as responding to aggressive behaviour, privacy and dealing with online abuse. * Prominent display of information about sexual harassment throughout the University on official noticeboards. * Information about harassment and assault forms a prominent part of orientation programs for all new Higher Degree by Research students and supervisors. * The [Safer Community webpage](https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/facilities-services/safer-community) on the University website is widely linked to from across the website and aggregates easy to use information for all staff and students. It is accessible via a screen reader, and written in plain language. It also allows users to anonymously report concerning behaviour. * Respect and Responsibility have developed postcards, to be widely disseminated to students, which clearly and simply advise how to support a friend or classmate who has experienced sexual assault or harassment, and gives details of support services, including services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants and refugees, and LGBTIQA+ people. More than 5,000 postcards have been distributed to date. * To date, more than 250 staff have undertaken face-to-face training with an experienced sexual assault counsellor in responding to disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment or family violence. * Senior People and Culture staff participated in a full-day workshop on responding to complex disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment or family violence in February 2020. A handbook for senior P&C staff, managers and staff is in preparation. * VU has made available to all staff the Universities Australia online training modules *Sexual harassment and sexual assault: how should staff respond?* | Continue to embed the response and support message in all interactions the University has with new staff and students.  Continue to review the VU SAFE app for its effectiveness and relevance, and explore new online reporting tools.  VU will offer the Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act sexual assault resistance education program for first-year identifying women students from 2021, alongside a program of bystander action and awareness for identifying men students. |
| **4**  **(University responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment)** | In response to Recommendation 4, Victoria University commissioned an independent expert to lead a review of its existing policies with regard to sexual assault and sexual harassment. Their recommendations resulted in the development and implementation of the University’s first [Sexual Harassment Response Policy](https://policy.vu.edu.au/document/view.php?id=413) and [Procedure](https://policy.vu.edu.au/document/view.php?id=440) and [Sexual Assault Response Policy](https://policy.vu.edu.au/document/view.php?id=414) and [Procedure](https://policy.vu.edu.au/document/view.php?id=439).  In addition to this review, the Respect and Responsibility team initiated a review of the Team Managers’ handbooks for student athletic teams attending the National Tertiary Student Games and the National Indigenous Tertiary Student Games. The guidelines for responding to a person who has experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment have been updated to centre the safety and support of the victim. All students and staff attending these national games have received either training or, at a bare minimum, information about response pathways and support services. | Continue to build awareness among staff and students of the new policies and procedures and consult on implementation.  A Family Violence Response policy and procedure is in development. |
| **5**  **(University responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment)** | Victoria University has provided training in responding to disclosures of sexual and family violence to significant numbers of students and staff on an ongoing and as-needs basis since 2017. The training has been provided by experienced trainers and counsellors from Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault (WestCASA) and CASA House and has included specialised professional development for Student Counselling staff, and a full-day training specifically written for senior People and Culture staff.  Categories of staff and students trained include:   * Counsellors and psychologists from the Student Counselling Service * Student Welfare Advisors and International Student Advisors * Safer Community and Respect and Responsibility staff * Security staff, including all contractors * Frontline Library staff * Learning Hubs (academic skills support) staff * Industry mentoring, work-integrated learning placement staff, and employment/careers staff * Student administration and student finance staff * Alumni office staff * International education and Study Abroad staff * Teaching staff and research office staff.   In addition, this training has also been provided to the following cohorts of students-as-staff and student leaders:   * Members of the Student Reference Group for Gender Equality * Student and Peer Mentors * Student Union and Postgraduate Association representatives and office-bearers * Clubs and Societies executives * National Games athletes | Please refer to VU’s [Building Respectful Futures Together Preventing Gender-Based Violence Strategy 2020—2023](https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/vu-respect-responsibility-strategy-2020_0.pdf) for more information. The approach and schedule of training that has been established will be maintained. |
| **6**  **(Monitoring and evaluation)** | As part of its commitment to implementing Recommendation 6, the University collects data about instances of sexual assault or sexual harassment reported by students and staff. The nature and extent of the data is as described in Recommendation 6. This information is stored confidentially and reported to the Manager, Integrity Office by Safer Community and to University committees.  The reach and impact of our engagement and educational prevention activities is monitored quantitatively through attendance and completion data, and qualitatively through focus groups and open-ended interviews. Results are reported formally annually via reports to senior University committees, and monitored at management level on an ongoing basis | A review of the ways in which the University collects and analyses data from disclosures as well as formal complaints about sexual harassment and sexual assault was commenced in 2020.  A refresh of the disciplinary framework is in progress, including the development of a new Student Code of Conduct that will be aligned with the University’s commitments to prevent gender-based violence. |
| **7**  **(Monitoring and evaluation)** | A four-stage audit of the University Counselling Service that matches the scope of Recommendation 7 commenced in May 2018 and results were reported in 2019. An independent auditor with expertise in the field of sexual assault and family violence was appointed for this work.  All recommendations of the review have been implemented. All Student Counsellors received professional development from CASA House in January 2020. The University has employed an experienced sexual assault counsellor to the role of Manager, Counselling and Accessibility. The Respect and Responsibility program and Safer Community form part the Reference Group which is implementing the University’s Student Mental Health Strategy. | Ongoing monitoring of progress. |
| **8**  **(Monitoring and evaluation)** | Victoria University supports the collective efforts within the sector, led by Universities Australia, to build on the work of *Change the Course* and to continue to track progress in reducing the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus.  In early 2019, UA, Our Watch and the Victorian Government partnered to develop an evidence-based, whole-of-institution model to prevent violence against women at and through universities. This model is the first of its kind anywhere in the world. Over the last 18 months, four universities – Southern Cross University, La Trobe University, Western Sydney University and Monash University – have been supported to refine this model by examining how they promote gender equality across all domains of the institution. This model, and all associated resources, will be released to the sector over the next year.  In March 2020, UA released a free training resource to the sector that addresses the drivers of violence against women and provides advice on effective responses to disclosures. This training was developed in partnership with Our Watch, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, and several Centres Against Sexual Assault. | Victoria University has committed to participating in the planned 2021 follow-up survey to Change the Course. |
| **9**  **(Residential colleges and university residences)** | Victoria University students have only one on-campus residence option, which is the privately operated UniLodge residence opposite the main campus in Footscray.  As part of its commitment to implementing Recommendation 9, Victoria University has:   * Established and funded mandatory training for all Residential Advisors (RAs) and reception staff at UniLodge@VU. RAs and reception staff are senior residents of UniLodge and are often the first point of contact for residents when issues of concern arise. This mandatory training is provided twice-yearly by an experienced sexual assault counsellor. * Provided training and resources from Safer Community to UniLodge staff and managers on responding to disclosures of sexual harassment and assault. * Provided resources for UniLodge to display promoting support and reporting of sexual assault and harassment at the University and externally. * Established with UniLodge management that any serious incidents within its VU residence must be reported to University management. Sexual assault and sexual harassment are both defined as serious incidents in the University’s agreement with UniLodge. Regular meetings take place between UniLodge management and senior University staff. This process is continuously monitored, and is currently working. * Encouraged, at a management level, UniLodge to address the full scope of Recommendation 9 across its many residences Australia-wide.   In addition, a Victoria University researcher has recently been awarded a significant Victorian government grant to undertake a research project aimed at “empowering female students to experience equality and respect in their residential college relationships and empower all students in those settings to speak out against violence knowing they will be supported”. The project is supported by key stakeholders in the university residential sector. | The current program of engagement with UniLodge will continue. |