

## UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA – REPORTING UPDATE TO THE AHRC ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE *CHANGE THE COURSE* NATIONAL REPORT

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### BACKGROUND

In February 2016, the Australian university sector – through its peak body group, Universities Australia – launched a national campaign, *Respect. Now. Always* (RNA), focused on raising awareness of and addressing attitudes to sexual assault and harassment in the university environment. It also aims to reduce, increase the visibility of support services for students, and promote the sharing of best practice of resources in relation to sexual assault and harassment (SASH).

Among the key initiatives of the campaign was a national student survey to investigate the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in a university setting, conducted by the Australia Human Right Commission (AHRC). Following the survey, the AHRC released the *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities 2017*, containing a series of key recommendations for the sector to address the results of the survey and improve institutional settings to prevent SASH occurrences. Alongside this, UA launched a complementary 10 Point Action Plan.

One of the key recommendations of the report was for each University to establish an advisory body to guide the implementation of recommendations made by the Commission. This advisory group would publically report on the University's progress against the recommendations.

In response, the University of Canberra established the *Respect. Now. Always* committee, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor, in 2017. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Geoffrey Crisp, with two Deputy Chairs, including the Dean of Students and Director of Student Life, Scott Pearsall, and the Deputy Director Student Connect, Mara Eversons. The Committee comprises various representatives across the University, including Academic and professional staff, students, residential advisors and medical and counselling professionals.

Over the last 18 months, the committee has been responsible for progressing a number of key initiatives to meet the recommendations of the report, as well as to address broader issues around respect, safety and inclusion on campus. An action plan was developed to help prioritise the recommendations and resources.

### KEY ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE AHRC REPORT

#### Reporting and governance

The main focus of the RNA Committee has been preventive action to address the core behaviours that can lead to sexual assault and sexual harassment. This is in acknowledgement that sexual assault is part of a continuum of behaviours that demonstrate lack of respect or understanding for others. The focus is on teaching healthy relationships and behaviours, engendering a safe and respectful campus environment.

One of the first measures put in place was the development of a comprehensive *Respect. Now. Always* Action Plan to address the recommendations of the AHRC report, as well as the Universities Australia 10 Point Action Plan and the CAPA report recommendations. The action plan has been developed in consultation with key internal stakeholders and people with relevant expertise.

The Action Plan is a live document that continues to be updated as new recommendations are made or strategies trialled. Keeping track of the Action Plan enables the University to respond effectively to various stakeholders in the request for information about progress, including the AHRC and Universities Australia, as well as internal bodies such as the University Council and the Student Representative Council. The Committee is also reviewing how it communicates to the UC community information about the Respect. Now. Always. response. The Committee is seeking to establish a mechanism to update on progress against the recommendations, as well as to publically report data on incidents of SASH. This will most likely be via an additional section on the University of Canberra website.

In early 2019, the Committee secretariat proposed that the Committee membership be broken into smaller working groups. Given the significant number of actions and issues to be addressed by the Committee, it was felt that dividing the workload across smaller groups may assist in being able to meet the University's obligations to its various stakeholders and the University Council. The Committee endorsed this approach, and subsequently six smaller working groups have been established (Communications; Governance and Reporting; Policy; Training and Resources; Safety and Security; Support and Welfare). This will enable a smaller, more agile meeting of an Executive Committee group (Chair, Deputy Chairs, Secretariat and working group leads), and enable each working group to focus on specific actions within their remit.

#### **Plans to address the drivers of sexual assault**

Among the strategies that have been employed to address the driver of sexual assault (recommendation two in the AHRC report) have been the provision of additional training modules, partnerships with local support agencies and community organisations, the formation of new on-campus networks, support for events to raise awareness of issues related to SASH, and ongoing communication campaigns to staff and students.

#### *Review of security and reporting arrangements and establishment of a centralised reporting platform*

Over the last twelve months, the RNA committee has worked closely with the Campus Estate and People and Diversity areas to review our existing reporting arrangements and develop and implement a new, centralised incident reporting and investigation mechanism, including a the establishment of a fit for purpose database of all hazards and security incidents. This is in line with the recommendation of the Broderick Review (see below) which requested that SASH incidents have a separate function to other types of incidents and hazards (where currently they have been part of the one reporting tool).

The subsection of the committee – including representatives from Campus Estate, Governance and Legal, People and Diversity, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic office, Medical and Counselling, Communications and Marketing, Residential Managers and students (via the SRC) – took into account best practice principles in the design and functionality of a new reporting tool. This includes having the ability to report anonymously (including the ability to re-open a case that has previously been reported anonymously when an individual wants to come forward and lodge a formal investigation), form data collection that is sensitive to the nature of reports that are being provided (i.e. separating SASH from other incident categories), the ability to include witness information, direct links back to medical and counselling and support services within the reporting mechanism, and an automated incident investigation workflow.

The new incident reporting tool, run through the Iviva platform, was made live on Monday 1 April for testing across some sections of the UC community, including the Security team. Unlike arrangements with

the previous Security team, Security will now report all incidents directly into the new incident reporting tool rather than through their own systems. This will provide a greater level of confidence in the data and greater visibility of the nature and prevalence of incidents that are occurring on campus.

### *Consent Matters*

One of the critical recommendations of the review was the mandatory introduction of Consent Matters. The University of Canberra has been using the module since 2017, but uptake has been low and there has been little awareness of the program across the broader University community.

In late 2018, a small group comprised of members of the RNA committee, as well as staff with relevant expertise across the University, convened to discuss the practicalities of mandatory implementation. It was agreed that a phased approach would be needed to roll-put the module effectively, accounting for changes required to policy and procedure; consideration given to compliance, especially for HDR students; the need for review of the content to ensure it was culturally appropriate for our diverse student cohorts; and investigation of the viability of the tool in partner locations. It was agreed that before the module could be made mandatory, an update would be required to the Assessment Policy, sanctions for non-completion would need to be agreed and appropriate provisions for exemptions would need to be implemented. It was therefore considered that Semester 2 2019 would be the earliest date that the module could be made mandatory, and even then only for domestic students.

In early 2019, the Dean of Students wrote to all students of the intention to make the Consent Matters module mandatory, with the University taking a phased approach to the roll-out of the module. In the communication, advice to students was that they should aim to complete the module ahead of the formal mandatory implementation. Parallel to this, the Study Skills team force enrolled all coursework students into the module in Canvas so that it was seen as part of their dashboard upon logging in. This alone has seen a significant increase in the number of completions without any formal policy change or sanctions being introduced. There have been more than 1200 completions in the two months between February and April since students were force enrolled. Management of the roll-out is ongoing.

### *Training Programs*

Psychologists from the UC Medical and Counselling Centre have developed series of specialised training workshop modules, Healthy Relationships. These workshops have been offered to all students at no cost and are running throughout the year. The delivery team have also offered to host cohort specific workshops (i.e. workshops by gender, for international students, for residential students) as well as one-on-one sessions for students who wish to participate outside of a group setting. The Medical and Counselling team have also been responsible for the delivery of Mental Health First Aid Training and engage regularly with staff from the Rape Crisis Centre and Lifeline to provide relevant training for staff, such as ethical bystander training, advanced trauma training and disclosure training.

### *Improvements to the physical environment*

The University has invested in significant improvement of the campus environment and security settings, such as increasing lighting, security presence and CCTV across campus to make monitoring more visible. In addition, a new Security team commenced with the University in April.

### *University Networks*

The University convenes a working group of key staff that are responsible for overseeing different elements of the student experience. The Student Matters group, established in 2017, meets regularly to discuss a range of topics related to student issues, including the RNA campaign and student well-being and safety.

The University has also established an Ally Network, a support and mentoring network for LGBTIQ+ communities within UC, with a focus on improving University settings and raising awareness of issues pertaining to LGBTIQ+ people. The group has coordinated a number of events and forums on campus, as well as advocated for changes to support LGBTIQ+ people in their work and study, such as for the establishment of gender inclusive facilities on campus.

### **Communication and information provision**

A small working group of RNA committee members – including Marketing, Communications, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic office, Medical and Counselling, Student Connect, Campus Estate and the Research Services team – has been formed to look specifically at the recommendation of the AHRC review to improve the provision of information to staff and students.

In late 2018, the working group focused on the creation of the Safe Community webpage, bringing together all existing information relating to student safety, security, consent and respect in a single landing page that is prominently featured on the top mega menu of the University home page. The site shares information on the AHRC survey results, the Consent Matters modules, reporting protocols, support available, the RNA campaign and community safety. This website content is continually updated as recommendations are addressed and actions are implemented. The newly established incident reporting tool has been moved to this site as well.

The working group is currently developing a multi-channel communication campaign focused on the themes of respect, consent, healthy relationships and support that will be rolled out in a staged approach from the second half of 2019. The intent of this strategy is to ensure that we are using consistent messages across all platforms and initiatives of the campaign and provide a promise from the University to all staff and students as the minimum standards and expectations they should have in relation to their safety and wellbeing as members of the UC community. The strategy will include the implementation of an ongoing campaign around safety and respect on campus. The messages from this campaign will be integrated into communications to students across various initiatives. In addition, the materials that are produced will be rolled out in different languages to meet the needs of the UC community. A number of existing materials produced by the Medical and Counselling team have already been translated (such as pocket support services booklets, posters and flyers on sexual health and consent) and these materials will be incorporated into the future campaign (also available in different languages).

In addition to the online portal, the University regularly communicates to students via a range of other mechanisms, including the student bulletin, the student magazine (Curieux, student and forums, social media, posters via the SRC and via email. The University also has existing staff and student induction procedures which ensure that all members of the UC community are aware of access to specific support services and the University's internal and external reporting procedures. The induction program for International students has been tailored to incorporate the involvement of ACT Policing, as well as specific

cultural training. This ensures that international students, who may not be as familiar with relevant laws, legislation and cultural settings, understand their rights and responsibilities in the Australian context.

### **External review of university policies and response pathways**

#### *Broderick Review*

Among the first priorities of the University of Canberra after the release of the *Change the Course* report was to undertake an independent review of the University's policies and response pathways in relation to SASH. The University commissioned the former sex discrimination commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, to undertake this independent review which was conducted over the course of early 2018 and finalised in September of that year. The final report, *University of Canberra: Creating a Safe and Inclusive Community for Living and Learning*, was presented to the University Council in October, where all of the recommendations were accepted and endorsed. Overall, the review found that the University of Canberra has set-up effective reporting and support structures to assist students and staff that have experienced incidences of SASH both on and off campus. However, as with most environments, there is more that the University can do to address the drivers of poor behaviour and to streamline reporting and response mechanisms to make them survivor centric. In addition, the review recommended that the University do more to support students from minority backgrounds who face higher levels of discrimination and may require additional support services. The recommendations arising from the review are now being actioned alongside the recommendations from the *Change the Course* report.

#### *Policy Review*

In addition to the external review completed by the Broderick team, the Governance and Legal team have drafted two policies, currently with the RNA committee for consultation, that seek to address recommendation four of the Broderick Review. The policies, *Dignity at Work and Study Policy* and *Sexual Assault Policy*, seek to articulate the University of Canberra's commitment to zero tolerance toward SASH and other discriminatory and exclusionary behaviours; provide a statement of the University's support to the principles of safety and respect; provide information regarding reporting and support mechanisms available; and outline the University's approach to investigating reports. All members of the community are covered by the scope of these policies.

#### *Staff assessment and training*

The University has acted to implement a number of initiatives to improve the training received by frontline staff, including identification of those staff who are most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and harassment.

The University has implemented the *Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Assault* training program, which is available for all staff to complete. Communication about this training program has been through the staff bulletin, and workshops have been held for key frontline staff and managers to complete a walkthrough of the program and be prepared for any staff questions that arise. The University has also facilitated a number of training sessions for staff and students, run by the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, on responding to disclosures of sexual violence.

To date, the Respect. Now. Always. campaign has focused primarily on the undergraduate student experience. However, it is important to have actions in place to support graduate students in

acknowledgement of the different relationships they have due to the nature of their studies. In response, the Graduate Research office has added the Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships (developed by Australian Council of Graduate Research and Universities Australia) to the Graduate Research welcome booklet; made changes to the HDR Application Outcomes forms and the Supervisory Registration Process; and is implementing a suite of training programs and materials on Respectful Supervisory Relationships that have been purchased off the ACGR.

#### **Audit of health and counselling services**

The University of Canberra Medical and Counselling Centre offers students a unique service delivery model, providing integrated assessment and medical assistance between the nursing and clinical staff and the counselling team. This ensures that students are triaged in the most effective and efficient manner and that those students who have urgent cases (such as disclosure of sexual assault) are dealt with on the same day as presenting.

#### **ONGOING COMMITMENT**

The University of Canberra remains committed to ongoing work associated with Respect. Now. Always. campaign, including ongoing monitoring and continued improvement of support services and information and the implementation of strategies to prevent harmful behaviour to our students and staff. The University commits to ongoing participation in ongoing national surveys and will continue to work closely with stakeholders such as the AHRC, Universities Australia and the Elizabeth Broderick team to ensure that we achieve an institutional environment and the policy setting that promote the health and safety of our students.