



Audit of university responses to the *Change the course* report

Snapshot of progress: August 2018

In 2017, the Australian Human Rights Commission conducted an audit of actions taken by Australian universities in response to the *Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities*.

In July 2018, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, wrote to all 39 Australian Vice Chancellors to request an update on actions taken over the previous eight months.

It is clear from the information provided that universities have made significant progress towards implementation of the recommendations since the last audit was conducted in December 2017. In their responses, universities highlighted specific actions they were taking to respond to the findings and recommendations of the *Change the course* report:

- 38 universities have reported establishing, or a commitment to establishing, an advisory body or working group, in addition to developing an action plan in line with **Recommendation 1** of *Change the course*. This has increased from 32 universities reporting this action in December 2017.
- In December 2017, all 39 universities reported implementing, or a commitment to implementing, training and education in relation to sexual assault, sexual harassment and respectful relationships to some or all of their students, in line with **Recommendation 2** of *Change the course*. Over the course of 2018, universities have continued to take steps to implement this recommendation.
- In December 2017, 39 universities reported that they have taken steps to increase the availability and visibility of their support services in line with **Recommendation 3** of *Change the course*. Over the course of 2018, universities have continued to take steps to implement this recommendation.
- 22 universities reported that they have launched or will launch apps for students that offer a range of information and services including links to support services, links to campus security or information on consent and relationships. This has increased from 20 universities reporting this action in December 2017.
- 37 universities reported implementing, or a commitment to implementing, a review of existing university policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment, as per **Recommendation 4** of *Change the course*. This has increased from 23 universities reporting this action in December 2017.
- 39 universities reported identifying staff members and student representatives most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment and ensured they have received training in responding to disclosures or are

preparing to do so, in line with **Recommendation 5** of *Change the course*. This has increased from 36 universities reporting this action in December 2017.

- 36 universities reported that they are working to ensure that information about disclosures and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment is collected and stored confidentially, in line with **Recommendation 6** of *Change the course*. This has increased from 22 universities reporting this action in December 2017.
- 33 universities reported planning to conduct an audit of university counselling services, as per **Recommendation 7** of *Change the course*. This has increased from 16 universities reporting this action in December 2017.
- All universities, through their peak body Universities Australia, have committed to conducting the national survey on the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment every three years, in line with **Recommendation 8** of *Change the course*.
- 29 universities have reported taking steps to review factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in their residential colleges and university residences, as per **Recommendation 9** of *Change the course*. This has increased from nine universities reporting this action in December 2017.

Some of the practical measures reported by universities included:

- **Australian Catholic University** has provided ACU counsellors with specialist professional development in the area of sexual assault and trauma. This was conducted by Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, CASA House (the Centre Against Sexual Assault) and the Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service.
- **Adelaide University's** appointment of the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission to conduct 'An Audit of Structures and Systems that Prevent and Respond to Incidents of Sexual Harassment and Assault'. A second independent audit is planned for 2019 to assess the progress the University has made in relation to the Equal Opportunity Commission's recommendations.
- **Deakin University, University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong** will commission an independent, expert-led review of the factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in their residential colleges.
- **Central Queensland University's** Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research has launched a pilot study into the past sexual experiences of university students. The study looks at issues such as attitudes and behaviours around respect and consent, experiences of harassment and assault, support service accessibility and whether students have ever been exposed to abuse or harassment using digital platforms. The results of this study will be used to inform the development of a university-wide education and awareness campaign and evidenced-based consent and respect training for staff and students.
- **Canberra University** has engaged Elizabeth Broderick to conduct a review of existing policies and procedures around reporting and disclosure of sexual

assault and harassment. Outcomes will be acted upon under the direction of the Vice-Chancellor, University Council and the RNA Committee.

- **University of Tasmania** commissioned an independent, expert-led review of existing policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment. The University engaged specialist external consultants (former Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Robin Banks and Indira Rosenthal, a human rights and gender consultant) to undertake an independent and expert review of the University's existing approach to sexual assault and harassment and evaluate its proposed future directions, including a set of recommendations, based on that review and good practice.
- **UNSW** has developed a 'Reporting Portal' which was launched by the Vice-Chancellor and the student leadership team. The Portal is a stand-alone reporting portal and data collection point for reports of sexual misconduct. It allows reports to be made anonymously, or with full details provided, depending on the wishes of the person experiencing sexual misconduct.
- **UTS** has developed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Relationships Australia to develop a new way for students to self-select a counsellor through a separate online service that lists UTS counsellors and more than 100 other professionals. Also, a new staff member has been employed specifically to ensure the capturing and reporting of data relating to complaints, and an evening counselling service is planned for later in 2018.
- **Victoria University** is partnering with AMES Australia to develop and implement the Preventing Violence Against Women Leadership Program. The program provides participants with the knowledge and skills required to become leaders in Preventing Violence Against Women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. To date, five Victoria University students and staff have graduated from the program.