Addressing Gender-Based Violence

Annual Report 2023

RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Content warning

This Annual Report includes reference to sexual harm and family violence and gender-based violence. Some readers may find this emotionally distressing. If you are affected by the subject matter of this report, please seek support at the services listed below.

1800RESPECT

Call 1800 737 732 to speak with a counsellor.

Safer Community

Safer Community is RMIT's dedicated service for students and staff, to seek support about experiences of violence, concerning, inappropriate, unwanted or threatening behaviour. This includes threats or hate speech, discrimination, sexual harm and harassment, assault, stalking, image-based abuse/doxing/catfishing or partner and family violence.

If something has happened or you are feeling uncomfortable or unsafe, either on campus or off. Reach out and we can share the options and support available to you.

Phone: +61 3 9925 2396
Email: safercommunity@rmit.edu.au
Online: Support Request Form

Please note that Safer Community is not an emergency service. If you or others feel at risk or consider the situation to be an emergency, phone 000. If you are on campus, contact Campus Security.

Contents

About this report

The *Addressing Gender-Based Violence Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027* presents an opportunity for RMIT to publicly reaffirm its commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students, staff, and all members of the University community.

This report outlines progress against the first year of the Strategic Action Plan and the associated workplan for 2023/24. The work of the Strategic Action Plan links to *RMIT's Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025* and the *Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework*.

Work in this area is led by the Prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV) team, and Safer Community, which manages the response to GBV and provides support to students and staff.

Foreword

Mish Eastman
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Vocational Education)
and Vice-President

**Professor
Denise Cuthbert**
Associate Deputy
Vice-Chancellor,
Research Training
and Development

As a University, driving positive action to create a safe space for all in our community is a role we take very seriously.

We are proud of our progress in addressing gender-based violence at RMIT in 2023. However, we have much more work to do in order to ensure the safety of every student and member of staff.

To fulfil our own expectations of safety and those of the communities we serve, a whole of institution approach is required. We must ensure sustained attention is given to addressing gender-based violence into 2024 and beyond.

Our Prevention and Response teams have worked hard across the University to improve awareness of our support services within our community, while ensuring our support builds trust with victim-survivors by delivering trauma-informed services.

Rates of disclosure in Australia are not reflective of the number of people who experience sexual harm. As we continue to work towards our strategic goals, we expect to see the numbers of disclosures increase as staff and students know where to find support and have the trust to engage with our services.

Continued effort will be required to critically monitor our policies, procedures, services and education and training programs for their efficacy, and to ensure our strategies for addressing gender-based violence are evidence-based. Ongoing commitment and accountability for progressing our agenda from executive leadership will then ensure we involve all members of our community.

As our approaches to addressing gender-based violence mature and adapt to a rapidly shifting legislative and regulatory landscape, we will also need to mature and develop the University's risk governance framework to better encompass both prevention and response to gendered violence and child protection wherever the business of the University is conducted, including global partnerships and global mobility practice.

Broad-based and deep cultural change does not happen quickly and calls on commitment at every level in the institution. Our thanks to all members of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group and the many hard-working staff across the University who have, together, advanced our ambitious workplan. We look forward to another year of collective effort, meaningful change and progress in 2024.

Mish Eastman and Professor Denise Cuthbert

**Co-Chairs of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group
on Addressing Gender-Based Violence**

Background: 2017 to 2023

RMIT is deeply committed to the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence and the appropriate response to disclosures and reports of sexual harm.

Following the release of the watershed *Change the Course* report by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2017, RMIT has strengthened its commitment to preventing sexual violence within its community and to delivering best practice support services.

RMIT has taken several important steps to ensure the University's prevention and response approaches are evidence-based and reflect best practice in the wider industry:

- Creation of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group on the Prevention of Gender-based Violence to steer the direction of our prevention and response strategies.

- Revision of our Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Harm e-learning module, now incorporated into our staff onboarding process and ongoing compliance training.

- Rollout of a version of the Australian Council of Graduate Research Professional Development Program Respectful Research Training for higher degree by research supervisors and candidates.

- Launch of the Gender Equity and Justice Community, Teaching and Learning Project, to challenge the complex social and educational conditions that allow disrespect, gender inequality and gender-based violence to exist.

- Extension of our Safer Community services to staff.

- Launch of a Restorative Engagement Program to provide a pathway for students and former students who have in the past experienced sexual harm. This is believed to be the first of its kind in a university setting.

- Full review of Student Conduct Policy and Procedure.

- Implementation of a broader Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy.

The University has developed several other initiatives aimed at supporting the continued development of safe and respectful communities. The *Respect at RMIT: Progress Report (2017-2022)* is a comprehensive report on all the University's efforts since 2017.

Our approach

The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group on Addressing Gender-based Violence (Advisory Committee) was established in 2017 and brings together senior leaders from across the University, including staff, students, academics and sexual harm specialists.

The advisory group provides oversight on the direction of our prevention and response program ensuring the University takes a sound, evidence-based, planned approach to addressing gender-based violence.

Following the findings from the National Student Safety Survey in 2021, the RMIT Advisory Group looked to address the low awareness of support services available to students. In response, the *Addressing Gender-Based Violence Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027* (Strategic Action Plan) was developed, which has a particular focus on building awareness of and engagement with our services.

Through the Strategic Action Plan, RMIT aims to achieve a set of specified outcomes. It also boldly sets out a Theory of Change that both guides all our activities and interventions and holds us accountable to create the change that is required. It also underpins and guides our Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF).

In 2023 the team finalised a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) which sets out the data that RMIT will use to monitor its progress towards these outcomes. This data will provide the insights needed for sound management and implementation decisions and will form the basis for annual progress reporting to the Advisory Committee, RMIT Council, RMIT senior executives and the wider University community.

Reporting on our key action areas

Awareness raising

RMIT's 2021 National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) data was limited due to low participation from our students, with only 665 higher education students taking part. However, the data showed that the University had some of the lowest rates of awareness of internal support services compared to other Australian universities.

Our approach to awareness-raising has shifted significantly and is now underpinned by health promotion and community development principles In 2023 we directly engaged more than 1900 staff and students across a range of events and reached more than 21,000 social media accounts during Respect@ Uni Week.

Our awareness raising work also applies a masculinities focus and the current evidence base for prevention of gender-based violence. Where we challenge the outdated and harmful beliefs, behaviours and norms , that exist in within our classrooms, colleges and communities. We provide activations and activities that empower staff and students to be part of the solution and to strengthen connection and help seeking behaviour.

2023 highlights

- Led a **complete rebrand of Safer Community**, including a new look for the student induction program, merchandise and promotional materials, and a website review.

- Developed a **five-year Strategic Communications Plan**.

- Participated in the **first-ever 'Respect@Uni Week'** alongside other key university partners from the state-wide Tertiary Primary Prevention Network (TPPN).

  – Reached **21,000 social media accounts**, with 451 reactions.

  – **98 RMIT students and staff** engaged in events including Meet Umibot, Movies@78 and a Safer Tent consent circle.

- Welcomed staff and students to **Safer Tent activations** at various events.

  – Semester 2 O-Week and Campus Fests across our City, Carlton, Brunswick and Bundoora campuses. **939 students** sat down at the faux campfire to chat with staff in a casual and safe environment.

  – Staff Wellbeing Expo at the City and Bundoora campuses. **127 staff engaged** in six mindfulness sessions.

- Engaged **207 students** with hot chocolate chats around the faux campfire at the RUSU Consent Matters event at City campus.

These numbers represent one-on-one engagement with a specialised staff member who provides both support service information and promotional material for the recipient to keep and share.
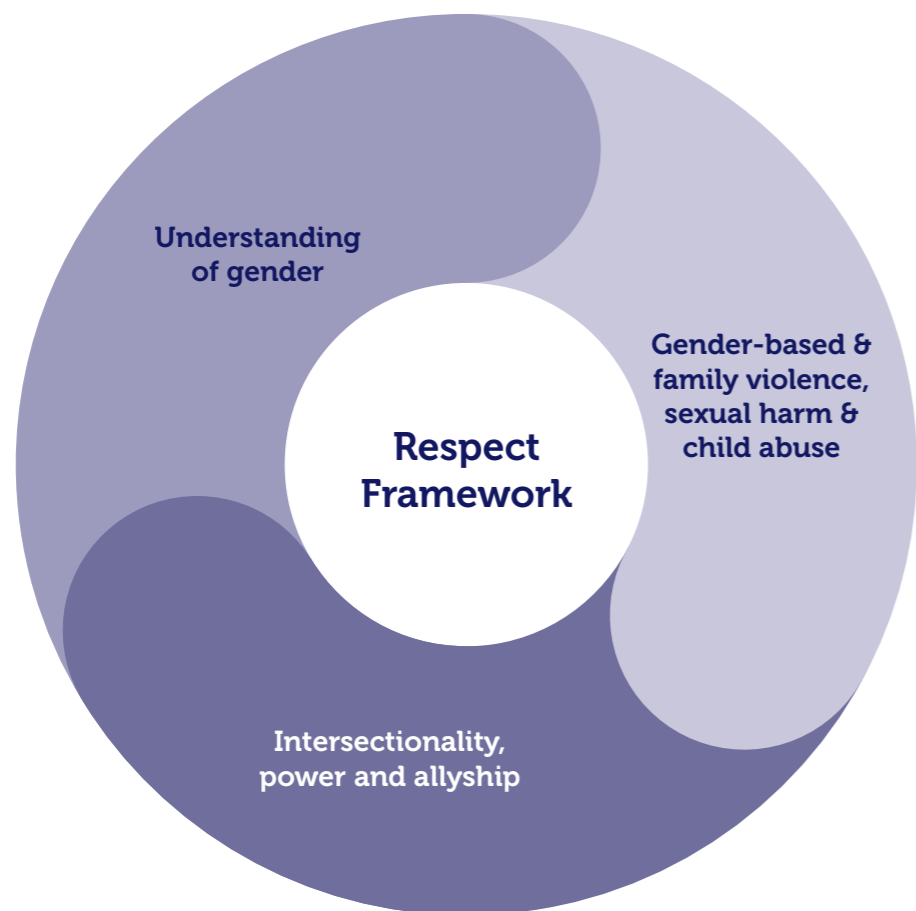
Spotlight:
A new venue for conversations

The introduction of the 'Safer Tent' for student and staff-facing events and activities brought new engagement opportunities in 2023.

Designed as a health promotion activation, the tent – an inflatable and portable yurt – was launched in Semester 2.

Inside, visitors are offered mindful activities or seated yoga. Outside, a faux campfire provides a second opportunity for conversation and connection over a low-cost seasonal menu: traditional s'mores and hot chocolate for winter events, and mock pina colada-inspired s'mores and iced coffee frappes for summer.

This approach supports slower and extended engagement with qualified staff. It encourages and enables student-led conversation, and the promotion of Safer Community as a key student support service. These activations also provide students with the chance to get to know other students, creating the space for friendships and social support which we know improves wellbeing, resilience and help-seeking behaviour.

Learning and capability development

Learning and capability development for all students and staff is one of three key action areas under our Strategic Action Plan and a major focus of work in 2023.

The aim was to create a complete learning and development (L&D) approach that provides a set of capabilities and competencies that are specific for gender-based violence prevention, and gender equality more broadly.

This approach is aligned to our University strategy *Knowledge with Action*, and provides clear scaffolding across other areas such as the *IDEA Framework*, the staff *Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 (GEAP)* and the *Student GEAP (2023-2026)*.

The GBV Prevention team undertook independent desktop reviews of L&D offerings at RMIT and sector specialist prevention and response service providers. An initial gaps analysis/review was conducted in late 2021 (incorporating offerings available during the Covid-19 lockdowns) and the second review was completed in early 2023.

The purpose of the review was to inform the creation of a broader L&D plan that would guide our future workload and be reflective of our Theory of Change, as outlined in our Strategic Action Plan.

Identified offerings were mapped against both the relevant compliance requirements, our newly drafted Respect Capability Framework and its three core respect capabilities (see below) and the Strategic Action Plan. External offerings that did not align with the Respect Capability Framework were not included in the follow-up analysis.

External offerings were reviewed in more detail when they met the following criteria:

- Modules or programs that had been evaluated or were evidence-based.

- Modules or programs that aligned with Our Watch's *Educating for Equality* and *Respect and Equality in TAFE* whole-of-organisation frameworks for addressing GBV among students, staff,

and the wider community.

- Modules or programs that demonstrated best practice (for example blended learning) and that had potential to be engaging and accessible for RMIT students and staff.

A number of best practice elements were identified by the GBV Prevention team as part of the broader L&D gaps analysis and review process. These best practice elements have been translated into the following guiding principles to support all efforts of the larger L&D approach.

All student and staff offerings developed should be:

- Grounded in relevant theory (for example feminist and gender, intersectionality, systems thinking, social justice), evidence-based and evidence-building (build on what works, acknowledge what doesn't), and aligned to established legal and practice frameworks for preventing violence (broadly and in the Higher Education and Vocational Education setting).

- Reflective of health promotion, community development, and gender and social transformative models, messaging and practices that challenge outdated stereotypes and norms.

- Trauma-informed and informed by a culture of collective care, health and safety for everybody.

- Identity and culturally safe, appropriate and responsive.

- Tailored, relevant, and inclusive by design for all target audiences, including English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) and accessible language frameworks.

- Informed by understandings of adolescent development, adult education and community education.

- Where appropriate/possible, supported through strong partnerships, co-design and collective change.

Respect Framework

- Understanding of gender
- Gender-based & family violence, sexual harm & child abuse
- Intersectionality, power and allyship

Understanding of gender	Intersectionality, power and allyship	Gender-based & family violence, sexual harm & child abuse	Cohorts
Foundational			All students
Intermediate			Student Leaders
Advanced			All staff
			People Leaders
			Senior Leaders

2023 highlights

- Completed a **full gap analysis and review** of L&D offerings at RMIT and the broader prevention field.

- Completed a **holistic L&D approach (strategy and work plan)** for the prevention of gender-based violence at RMIT, aligned with other key RMIT frameworks and action plans.

- Completed and launched a **public-facing report** *Planning for change – a learning and development approach for the prevention of gender-based violence, sexual harm and harassment at RMIT.*

- Commenced a Priority Project in partnership with Deakin University, La Trobe University and Swinburne University through the Tertiary Primary Prevention Network (TPPN). The project is a snapshot **review of current L&D offerings to students across the state and nationally**. RMIT is leading the desktop review and a shared public report will be launched in early 2024. The aim is for findings to provide a clearer picture of what is offered in the university sector and support stronger collaboration and advocacy for this work in the context of higher education in Victoria and Australia.

- Launched a **Consent Partnership project with RUSU**. Informed by student feedback and RUSU's continued commitment and advocacy to secure a Consent module for all students, we established a three-year contract with Learning Consent. From Semester 1 2024, this will provide all students with a new, evidence-based and interactive 30-minute consent and respectful relationships e-learning suite.

- Launched a **Staff Sexual Harassment learning suite** in partnership with the Victorian Human Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). This interactive and evidence-based 30-minute e-learning module on sexual harassment in the workplace is now part of the onboarding process for all staff. Additionally, all People Leaders and Senior Leaders will receive a tailored in-person workshop in the first half of 2024.
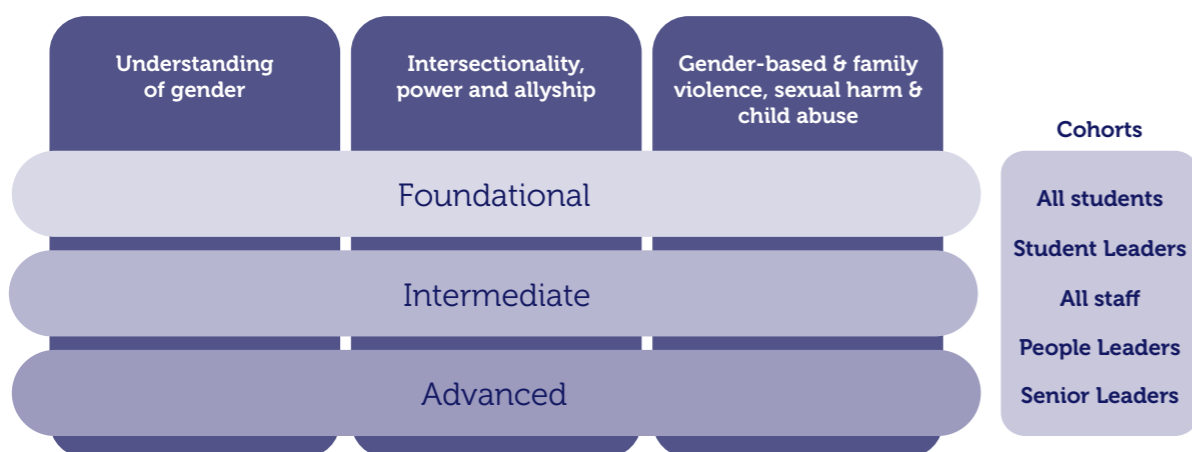
Innovation projects and activities

During 2023 we tested and implemented strategies and activities to enhance our ability to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

Strengthened relationship with Safer Community Vietnam

The Safer Community team in Melbourne continued to strengthen its working partnerships with counterparts in Vietnam through regular contact and by providing response support and advice.

Melbourne-based Safer Community staff were engaged in the recruitment of the newly created roles of Manager and Child Safe Advisor in the Vietnam team.

In June, Melbourne's Safer Community Senior Manager travelled to Vietnam to support the induction of Vietnam's Safer Community Manager. In the interim period, the Senior Coordinator provided remote supervision to the Advisor.

New case management system

In August, the Safer Community team started using Salesforce for case management and record-keeping. The system allows for genuine anonymous and third-party reporting. The establishment of this reporting mechanism will enable further scrutiny of trends and data analysis which will further inform both prevention and response activities with a view to improving outcomes for all involved. In addition, it will help the team meet the increasing demand for data.

Improved risk management

The Safer Community team increased its risk management capacities in the following ways:

- Completed Stalking Risk Profile training, increasing capabilities to exercise sound professional judgement specific to risk assessment and management of stalkers.

- Trained with Dr Annabel Chan, an expert in threat assessment and management, to inform a deep dive into case management processes.

- Embedded the Assessment of Risk and Manageability Tool, developed specifically for Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) matters in the tertiary education environments, into the team's work.

- Engaged with Monash University to establish a tertiary-specific risk assessment tool. Currently under development, it is being considered for piloting at RMIT in Q3/4 2024.

Streamlining policies and procedures

Our policies and procedures are on a two-year cycle for review, in line with the specialist response mechanism.

A key priority for Safer Community in 2024 is the finalisation of an internal governance handbook to ensure a cohesive, predictable approach to service provision, continuity of processes and evidence base for assessments and effective decision-making.

Spotlight:
Implementing a specialist response to GBV

Safer Community is committed to providing a people-centred, trauma-informed approach to support for gender-based harm for both victims and perpetrators.

The University has incorporated a specialist gender-based violence investigative capability in the Safer Community team through the newly created role of Senior Investigator, Specialist Response to Gender-Based Violence. The role enables a trauma-informed approach to the investigation and case management of gender-based violence matters.

The Senior Investigator has worked closely with stakeholders to agree processes for referral which have been implemented in the student space and are nearing completion for staff. They have also undertaken early interventions through confidential options interviews with Safer Community Advisors which has led to increased transparency and improved stakeholder relationships. It also creates a smooth transition from disclosure to formal reporting, resulting in reduced impacts of re-traumatisation.

The Senior Investigator plays a key role in providing timely advice and recommendations to all RMIT stakeholders and decision-makers involved in the complaints and specialist investigation process. In time, this will build confidence and trust, ensuring an improved experience for staff and students.

The Gender Equity and Justice Project

This innovative College of Vocational Education (CoVE) pilot project commenced in February 2022 and ended in December 2023.

During the pilot, we engaged **2000 students and staff** in activities that sparked awareness raising and anti-violence conversations.

The project had three key streams attempting to apply a masculinities, gender equity and anti-violence focus:

- Stream 1 – A student-facing engagement piece (allyship)
- Stream 2 – A review and recommendation for changes to curriculum and learning
- Stream 3 – A review and recommendation for support for teaching staff

These streams and approaches reflect the national Our Watch Respect and Equality in TAFE (RET) framework.

Overall, many of the findings associated with this project have significantly informed the L&D approach and the new Safer Tent pop-ups.

Become a Gender Justice Ally

📅 15 Mar 2023 - 16 Jun 2023

♀ Melbourne City

Do you identify as a man and want to be a part of the solution for a more equal and less violent world? Sign up today!

2023 highlights

- Engaged **over 1400 students** in innovation activities, including Man Box Bingo hallway hangs, classroom presentations and drop ins, Feminist on Cell Block Y movie screenings, a Pride Pop Up Barbershop with Little Rebel, Ignite CoVE event and Safer Tent and Safer Community activations, across all CoVE locations (Carlton, Brunswick and Bundoora).

- Partnered with City of Melbourne and students and staff from the CoVE – Creative Industries on the **Working Together with Men industry partnership** (see Spotlight, page 18).

- Developed a pilot training module for *Work, Health and Safety – Psychosocial Skills and Professional Conduct for the Workplace* for students and apprentices undertaking construction and built environment courses.

- **Creation of teaching content** including The Gender Justice Barbershop with Matt and Nas Podcast.

- **Publication of Working Together with Men 2.0** that provides resources and recommendations for VET and higher educational settings.

- Participated in partnership with the statewide Respect and Equality in TAFE (RET) Community of Practice, led by Melbourne Polytechnic.

Section 2

Spotlight: Devising new prevention ideas in partnership

The Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project team worked with industry partner the City of Melbourne (CoM) and the students and staff of the CoVE – Creative Industries to deliver a version of the Working Together with Men (WTWM) model.

Eight industry professionals from a range of departments within CoM completed the WTWM training and presented their small-scale project prevention ideas to women accountability panels in February.

Five key projects were green lit across CoM, with the Local Laws branch's 'Busking Safely in the City' chosen as a key project for student engagement.

Students and staff from CoVE – Creative Industries worked with CoM and other industry specialists to co-create a pilot training induction film to support and educate new and current street performers about their right to safety and expected behaviour when busking in the City of Melbourne. This includes calling out street harassment that impacts both the performer's and the public's experience.

A number of students from the Bachelor of Communication (Media) and Advanced Diploma of Screen and Media have completed foundational gender-based violence training and co-facilitated a lived experience workshop with 19 street performers to inform script writing.

Support Within RMIT

Campus Security

If there's an emergency on campus, security staff are available to respond immediately.

https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-locations-and-facilities/facilities/safety-security/campus-security

Student support

RMIT Counselling Services: provides free, confidential, short-term professional counselling to currently enrolled students. In-person and video consultations up to 50 minutes in length are available at all Melbourne campuses.

https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support- services/health-safety-wellbeing/mental-health- counselling/counselling

Urgent mental health support:

Phone: 1300 305 737

Text 0488 884 162

Employee Assistance Program (staff support)

The EAP, provided by Converge International, is a confidential counselling, coaching and wellbeing service free for all for RMIT leaders, staff, and their immediate family members. The service can help you manage work and life experiences, issues or concerns that arise from time to time.

Support Outside RMIT

Anxiety, depression, or suicide

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicideline: 1300 651 251

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

OCD and Anxiety Helpline: 1300 269 438

Kids Helpline (5 to 25-year-olds): 1800 551 800

Sexual assault

Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 1800 806 292

Centre Against Sexual Assault: 9635 3610

MensLine: 1300 789 978

Full list of resources:

https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-locations- and-facilities/facilities/safety- security/campus-security/emergency-crisis- support

Key definitions

Disclosure: Where a person first makes known an incident of sexual harm with RMIT. This may or may not lead to a report being made via the Complaints Governance Policy or another reporting avenue.

Family/domestic violence: This includes harmful or violent behaviour that is used to control, threaten, force or dominate a family member through fear. It can include behaviour that is physically or sexually abusive, emotionally or psychologically abusive, economically abusive, threatening, coercive or in any other way controls of dominates the family member and causes the family member to feel fear for their safety or wellbeing.

Formal Report: An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a student or staff member, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Note: Very few disclosures become formal reports.

Gender: Refers to the economic, social, political, and cultural attribute and opportunities associated with being a man or woman or identifying as non-binary; gender defines masculinity and femininity. It is a sociocultural expression of particular characteristics and roles that are associated with certain groups of people with reference to their sex and sexuality. Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.

Gender equality: Gender equality means equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between all people and all genders.

Gender-based violence: An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against an individual or group of individuals based on their ascribed gender. It is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence. This term also described targeted violence against LGBTQI+ populations when referencing violence related to masculinity/femininity norms and/or gender norms.

Gender-based violence prevention: Refers to taking action to stop gender-based violence from occurring. Examples include scaling up activities that promote gender equality or working with communities, particularly men and boys, to address practices and norms that contribute to gender-based violence.

Intersectionality: Refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Aspects of a person's identity can include social characteristics such as Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, race, colour, age, ability, mental health. These social characteristics can interact and exacerbate each other, thus affecting an individual's experience of either privilege or oppression.

An intersectional approach in the context of addressing violence against women and children, recognises that the way women experience gender and inequality can be different based on a range of interactions between multiple systems and structures of oppression. This approach also recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of violence women experience can be compounded and magnified because of these other forms of oppression and marginalisation, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, or barriers to accessing support.

Allyship: Men taking positive action to support gender equality. Examples include challenging sexism, advocating for gender equality, and publicly and privately recognising women's achievements.

Rape: A person intentionally sexually penetrating another person without that person's consent.

Tertiary prevention: Also referred to as "response", tertiary prevention refers to efforts and programs used to address existing violence including crisis counselling, financial and housing services, or medical assistance as well as police and justice responses. These efforts aim to prevent the reoccurrence of violence by holding perpetrators accountable and supporting victim-survivors.

Sexual harm: An umbrella term that covers non-consensual behaviour of a sexual nature that causes a person to feel uncomfortable, frightened, distressed, intimidated, or harmed, either physically or psychologically. Sexual harm includes behaviour that also constitutes sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape.

Sexual harassment: This can be any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour such as touching, staring, wolf-whistling, dirty jokes and requests for sex. This includes anything that makes a person feel uncomfortable, offended, intimidated or humiliated.

Sexual assault: Any non-consensual behaviour of a sexual nature that makes someone feel uncomfortable, frightened, intimated, or threatened.

Technology-facilitated abuse: A form of controlling behaviour that involves the use of technology as a means to coerce, stalk or harass another person.

Trauma informed: Trauma-informed care and practice acknowledges the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of people and communities. A trauma-informed approach recognises the importance of having a complete picture of a person's situation – past and present – in order to provide effective health care services with a healing orientation. Some of the core principles of trauma-informed care are to avoid retraumatising individuals and support safety, collaboration, and empowerment to promote healing.

Victim-survivor: The term describes people including adults, children and young people who have directly experienced some form of abuse, violence, or harm. Victim-survivor acknowledges the variety of experiences, ongoing impacts and strength and resilience of people with lived experiences of these behaviours. The term is also inclusive of people from CALD backgrounds and LGBTQI+ populations.

Useful links

Safer Community
Respect RMIT – reducing sexual harm
Sexual Harm policy suite
SafeZone safety app

1.
Safer Community data 2023

RMIT is committed to delivering on the recommendations set out in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course (2017)* report. Over the last few years, the University has been improving data capture systems to better share a broad set of sexual harm data, including formal reports and disclosures.

The communication of this data is a key part of the University's drive to be open, honest and accountable, while keeping our communities informed of our progress towards the goals set out in the Strategic Action Plan. The current data set provides a high-level overview of the information currently recorded and available to the Safer Community team. This includes the capacity to consider trends in relation to gender, level of study, domestic and international students. It reflects our efforts on expanding awareness of the availability of the University's support services through numerous activations detailed in Part One of this report.

RMIT will continue to review the types of data communicated each year to ensure we balance transparent reporting with the University's commitment to the anonymity of our victim-survivors.

2.
Gender-based violence disclosure data

Australian data tells us that sexual assault and sexual harassment is underdisclosed and underreported. RMIT is committed to the provision of evidence-based, best practice prevention and response efforts with the aim of facilitating increased disclosure rates. Because an increase in disclosures is an indicator of increased confidence in our response systems and procedures.

In 2023, the percentage of overall reports received by Safer Community that related to gender-based violence (encompassing family violence and sexual harm) was 29.5% (18% sexual harassment and sexual harm and 11.5% family violence). This has largely been proportionally consistent from 2021 and 2022, however there has been a significant increase in referrals regarding all forms of concerning behaviour across the University in 2023.

2.1   Staff and student disclosures

RMIT will always support victim-survivors regardless of where the harm occurred. This includes both within and outside an RMIT context.

RMIT's largest campus is located in Melbourne's CBD, so we necessarily have a broad definition of what constitutes an RMIT context.

We define the RMIT context as on campus or in the workplace, at a University or club event, on placement, in student accommodation, on a study tour/exchange, or while travelling to or from the University. In addition, incidents of sexual harm that occur off campus or online may also be considered to have occurred in an RMIT context depending on the circumstances.

Our broad definition of the RMIT context is in response to the 2021 National Student Safety Survey that included data on disclosures of sexual harm.

In the data below, outside an RMIT context refers to any activity, event or location that doesn't meet the definition of within an RMIT context, such as a private social event.

RMIT takes a whole-of-institution approach to prevention and support in order to generate change across multiple levels. Part of this is reporting on both staff and student disclosures.
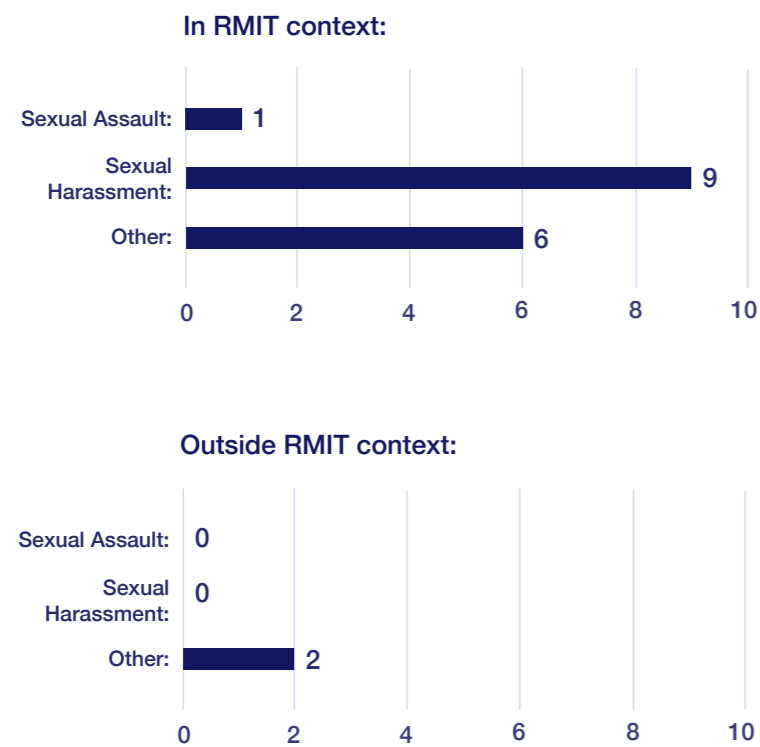
In 2023, both staff and student disclosures of sexual harm incidents increased from 2022 levels, which we believe indicates our efforts to raise awareness of our support services and the formal reporting process has been impactful.

Unfortunately, we know that rates of disclosure in Australia are not reflective of the number of people who experience sexual harm. As we continue to work towards our strategic goals, we expect to see the numbers of disclosures increase as staff and students learn where to find support and build trust in our services.

2.2 Staff disclosures

Figure 1 shows the staff disclosures, with 16 occurring within an RMIT context and 2 occurring outside the RMIT context. Of those, disclosures: 1 was sexual assault, 9 were sexual harassment and 8 were other forms of gender-based violence, such as stalking.
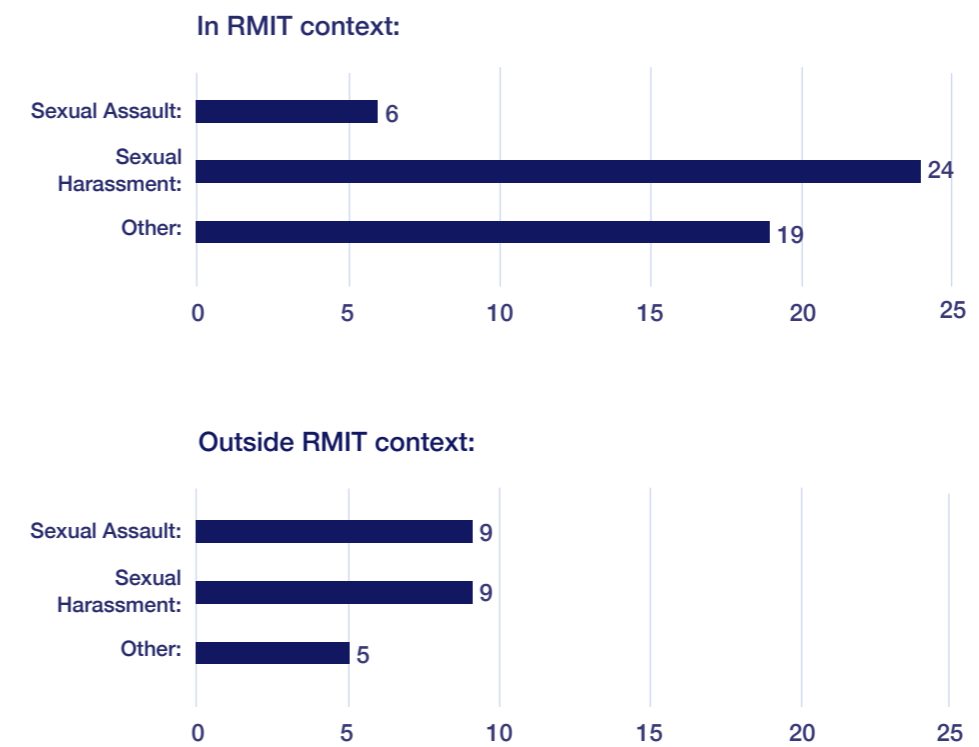
Figure 1

In RMIT context:

Category	Value
Sexual Assault:	1
Sexual Harassment:	9
Other:	6

Outside RMIT context:

Category	Value
Sexual Assault:	0
Sexual Harassment:	0
Other:	2

2.3 Student disclosures

Figure 2 shows the student disclosures, with 49 disclosures occurring within an RMIT context and 23 occurring outside of an RMIT context. Of those disclosures: 15 were sexual assault, 33 were sexual harassment and 24 were other forms of gender-based violence, such as stalking.

Figure 2

In RMIT context:

Category	Value
Sexual Assault:	6
Sexual Harassment:	24
Other:	19

Outside RMIT context:

Category	Value
Sexual Assault:	9
Sexual Harassment:	9
Other:	5

Safer Community also provided active case management and support to 45 students and 11 staff throughout 2023 in relation to Family and Domestic Violence (FDV).

In comparison to 2022, FDV referrals increased by 25. This increase reflects a growing awareness of the Safer Community team and its support services for staff impacted by Family Violence.

3.
Formal reports and any disciplinary or investigation actions

Disciplinary report process

RMIT supports victim-survivors to make informed decisions about their options following an incident.

The University offers victim-survivors a range of support options following a disclosure regardless of where the incident occurred. Supports available include access to wellbeing support and materials including counselling and financial grants, as well as the option to formally report an incident.

While not all victim-survivors decide to formally report an incident, those that do have the option to instigate a trauma-informed investigation.

Formal reports can lead to several possible disciplinary actions, including behavioural warnings and executive suspensions for students and employment-related disciplinary actions for staff, such as formal warnings and terminations.

Figure 3 shows reports where students are the perpetrators that received disciplinary actions and those that did not.

Figure 3

4 Reports:

Disciplinary Actions:	4
No Disciplinary actions:	0
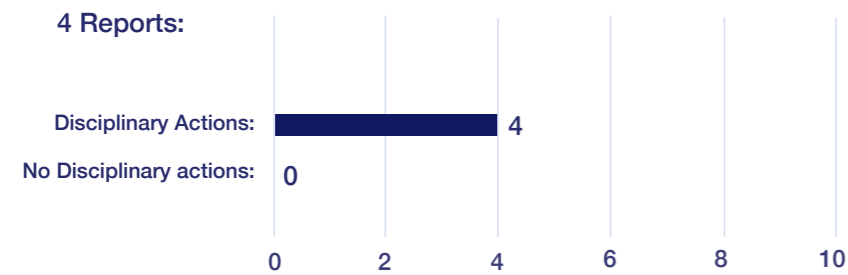
3.2   Staff conduct data

Figure 4 shows reports where staff were the perpetrators that received disciplinary action and those that did not. No disciplinary action can be the result of unsubstantiated claims and report withdrawals.

One report withdrawn

Figure 4

14 Reports*

Disciplinary Actions:	11
No Disciplinary actions:	2
Ongoing	2