

# Changing the Course at RMIT

A three year plan to reduce sexual harm

This living document will be refreshed regularly

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### Guiding principles

1. Trauma-informed support and care
2. Collaborative and inclusive
3. Evidence based, addressing root causes
4. Sustainable and whole of organisation
5. Commitment and leadership at all levels

### Key RMIT stakeholders

The whole RMIT community, including:

- Students and their leaders
- All RMIT Staff
- Partnered accommodation providers
- Student and staff unions

### Complexities

1. Our community is constantly changing and refreshing
2. Addressing both staff and student communities, recognising that they overlap
3. Simultaneous focus on prevention and response
4. Sexual harm is a complex issue affecting societies around the world

## Prevention framework

Three major workstreams which intersect and support each other to amplify (and) impact

### CULTURE OF RESPECT

#### Primary prevention

Aim to prevent sexual harm from occurring in the first place

### SUPPORT AND CARE

#### Secondary prevention

Support for those experiencing sexual harm. Targeted interventions aimed at those at risk of perpetrating these behaviours

### INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

#### Tertiary prevention

Responses after sexual harm has occurred to minimise impacts, prevent re-occurrence and ensure perpetrator accountability

OUTCOMES *	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>RMIT communities are safe and free from violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement campaign initiated</li><li>• Visible support from leadership</li><li>• Sexual harassment policy refreshed</li><li>• Coordination and alignment with e.g. Gender Equality Strategy, Athena Swan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roll out engagement campaign Stage 1: focus on awareness and how to report</li><li>• Communicate clear expectations about respectful and inclusive behaviour including within policies</li><li>• Roll out staff responding to disclosures e-learning module</li><li>• Design a comprehensive alcohol policy comprising evidence based strategies for university settings (Curtin Research)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Launch evaluation framework for RMIT's action</li><li>• Roll out engagement campaign Stage 2 including attitudes pulse check</li><li>• Drive respectful and inclusive values and culture through strategic conversations, events, targeted professional development etc</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement evidence-based targeted interventions to support diverse communities (acknowledging Intersectionality) including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse students and staff, DGSS communities as well as RMIT entities and partners.</li></ul>
<b>Relationships are respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff-student relationships policy review commenced</li><li>• Skill development delivered face to face for students and staff (first wave)</li><li>• Development of skills building e-learning suite</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build awareness and skills among students and staff in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Respectful relationships and consent</li><li>- Bystander action</li></ul></li><li>• Deliver skills development to students living in residences associated with RMIT and members of RMIT clubs</li><li>• Commence review of staff sexual harassment compliance modules to make explicit required standards of behaviour</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource teaching staff to embed impactful values and culture in curriculum and learning environments - adopting a whole of school approach where possible</li><li>• Amplify male leadership and modelling of positive male attitudes and behaviours</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage with industry partners and peak bodies who employ RMIT graduates, host WIL placements, partner in research around reducing sexual harassment and assault</li></ul>
<b>Services meet the needs of those experiencing sexual harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support to report and to respond</li><li>• On campus specialist sexual harm counselling service</li><li>• Additional staff to support casework</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refine services which support those affected, aligned with trauma-informed principles</li><li>• Resource and manage increased demand</li><li>• Provide evidence based interventions to support staff working in sexual harm in order to reduce vicarious trauma/burnout</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support those affected by sexual harm through conduct and complaints</li><li>• Support students affected by sexual harm through academic processes including special consideration, academic appeals and the academic 'at risk' process</li><li>• Prepare for the second national survey</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respond to the second national survey findings and recommendations</li></ul>
<b>Justice responses are effective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints handlers, misconduct investigators and advisors trained in responding to disclosures (first wave)</li><li>• Commitment to Restorative Engagement (CIJ Project)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student and staff misconduct processes to align with guiding principles particularly trauma informed practice</li><li>• Deliver training in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Responding to disclosures (Senior Officers)</li><li>- Restorative Engagement (Executive leaders)</li></ul></li><li>• Develop a threshold to refer matters for third party, external investigation and finding of fact</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve student access to university justice by integrating the option of Restorative Justice into student conduct processes</li><li>• Train Senior Officers in Restorative Engagement and Restorative Justice</li><li>• Strengthen reporting cultures across Student clubs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build partnerships with multi-disciplinary community services</li><li>• Develop and pilot approaches to remove justice barriers for diverse communities</li><li>• Review and refine Restorative processes</li></ul>
<b>Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen staff misconduct findings &amp; penalties</li><li>• Student misconduct penalties reviewed for consistency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop best practice standards for investigations and for discipline action to hold perpetrators to account</li><li>• Develop and implement guidelines for consistent application of student misconduct penalties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore a single code of conduct across RMIT community</li><li>• Research evidence-based behaviour change programs designed to prevent any recurrence or escalation of inappropriate behaviour e.g. education, counselling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt evidence-based behavioural interventions and penalties to prevent recurrence</li></ul>

\*aligned to *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*

## Enabling delivery and success

### Oversight

- Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group meets quarterly. Representatives from across RMIT community including wellbeing and services staff, researchers, ARG, HR, RUSU
- Action streams driven by leaders across Student Wellbeing & Inclusion, ARG and HR
- Student consultation group consisting of student leaders (e.g. RUSU SSCC members and interested students) established
- Independent expert led review of actions in response to actions in response to Change the Course recommendations

### Monitoring progress

- Evaluation framework
- Pulse survey (attitudinal)
- National survey in 2020 (prevalence)
- Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group
- Australian Human Rights Commission, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, National Union of Students, End Rape on Campus, Universities Australia

### Challenges

- Resourcing for project management, change and communication & increasing caseload
- Alignment of staff and student discipline processes constrained by the EA
- Achieving consistent staff engagement and modelling of respectful behaviour across a large, diverse and fluid student population and workforce