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

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| **University name: SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY** | | |
| **Recommendation no.** | **Action already taken** | **Planned/future action** |
| 1 Vice-Chancellors should take direct responsibility for the implementation of these recommendations, including decision-making and monitoring and evaluation of actions taken.  To assist and advise them in this respect, Vice-Chancellors should have an advisory body within their institution which has responsibility for guiding the implementation of the recommendations made in this report.  The advisory body should be responsible for developing an action plan for the implementation of these recommendations. | A Student Safety Taskforce, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and reporting to the Vice Chancellor was established. The Taskforce had a specific focus on addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment.  Membership on the Taskforce included University staff across the 3 main campuses (including representatives with links to external providers such as the police and external health services) and student representation.  The Taskforce reported regularly to the Vice Chancellor as programs and strategies were developed. The program benefited from earlier work where SCU was the first Australian University to sign up as a member of the global Healthy Universities network, had conducted student health and wellbeing surveys and shared the findings in scholarly journals.  The Taskforce was supported by two other working groups, one attending to campus residential accommodation and the other an implementation group focused on identifying risk. | Following personnel and structural changes at the Executive level, a new SCU Framework for Student Safety and Wellbeing was approved in June 2018. Responsibility for this initiative is with the Pro Vice Chancellor (Students) and Dean of Education, Professor Nan Bahr.  The initiative seeks to create a broader ‘social awareness*’* of safety and wellbeing for the student body that is firmly embedded within the University community and sustainable over time.  The work of the Student Safety Taskforce, the Respect.Now.Always initiative and guidance from Universities Australia, including the recently released *Guidelines for university responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment (the UA Guidelines)* are now integrated into this new framework. A high level advisory board for safety oversight has been established to extend and sustain this work, chaired by the PVC (Students). This board will provide an ongoing and reporting function for the University. A sub-committee of the board will attend specifically to the issues of sexual assault and harassment, through the action plan developed in accordance with Recommendation 1.  An external consultant, Professor Jeff Wilks, has been appointed for an initial six months to support the initiative (July – December 2018). Professor Wilks is a registered health psychologist and lawyer with an international reputation specialising in the safety of vulnerable groups. His initial priorities include undertaking an audit of current policies, programs and services, a SWOT analysis and a directions report by 31 August 2018. |
| 2 Universities develop a plan for addressing the drivers of sexual assault and sexual harassment that provides students and staff with education and identifies existing resources and communication campaigns | The Student Safety Taskforce developed a Student Safety Action Plan focussed on:   1. Improving University Responsiveness 2. Equipping Students with Knowledge and Skills 3. Targeting Higher Risk Environments 4. Increasing Visibility and Commitment to Student Safety   Specific initiatives aimed at addressing the drivers of sexual assault and harassment included:   * Consent Matters and First Responder (Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence) training modules deployed through the SCU BlackBoard virtual learning environment and course management system * Wide distribution of print material highlighting the University’s position that sexual assault and sexual harassment would not be tolerated and providing information on services available to assist students, especially counselling and psychological support services * Development of sexual assault and sexual harassment webpage <https://www.scu.edu.au/current-students/services-and-support/sexual-assault-and-sexual-harassment/> with emergency contacts, counselling support, reporting pathways and university policies.   Other strategies were aimed at targeting higher risk environments:  **UniBar -**   * Revised hours of operation and patronage (staged transition to restrict patronage to staff and students for large events and strict adherence to the Lismore Liquor Accord). * Implementation of security briefings pre and post events. * Active use and review of CCTV feeds * Procurement of a new point of sale retail and entry documentation system to record all patrons and identify repeat offenders prior to entry * Relaunched the UniBar as the Southern Cross Deck and Lounge to shift away from an alcohol emphasis associated with a Bar.   **Residential colleges –**   * New orientation program with increased focus on sexual assault, drugs/alcohol and healthy relationships.   **Campus libraries –**   * Providing information for reporting, including use of Multiscreen technology * All staff briefed about the AHRC survey results and provided with contact details and strategies to help any student who required assistance. * All front of house staff have undertaken HR training in dealing with reports of harassment and assault * A chat service has been implemented so that any person can report immediately and anonymously anything they observe in library spaces (*see something say something*) or a person can immediately notify a staff member if they are feeling unsafe. * Increased patrols by library staff of library buildings. | Through the new Student Safety and Wellbeing advisory board chaired by the PVC (Students) there is a continued focus on implementation and improvement in response to ongoing evaluation and benchmarking.  Planned initiatives include:   * Small group seminars for staff to discuss their roles and responsibilities in responding to disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment (led by qualified and experienced facilitators) * Closer liaison with key contact groups within the University: student associations on the different campuses, counselling and psychological support services, campus security and accommodation providers to ensure a consistent and high quality immediate response is available to any student requiring assistance * Review of all orientation materials across campuses to again ensure a clear and consistent set of messages and support is available to students, and that they are fully aware of the services and support * Development of closer relationships with external stakeholders (such as the Police and support health and counselling services) for each of the campuses * Expanding response pathways that take into account the University’s multi-campuses, the mix of domestic and international students across regional and city-based locations, plus a high proportion of mature-aged students and students studying online. |
| 3 In order to ensure students and staff know about support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment, universities should widely disseminate information about procedures and resources.  Universities should evaluate the activities undertaken to increase awareness of support services and reporting processes. | Initiatives by the Student Safety Taskforce have included:   * The sexual assault and sexual harassment webpage (described above) with improved search functionalities and hard copy resources. * Information about available internal and external support services – including Sexual Assault referral services and reporting processes to the Police, Mental Health services and extensive information about Counselling and Psychological Support Services. * Ongoing relationships with locally available external services; for example, the Counselling Services team undertook training by specialist sexual assault counsellors from the local health services to increase the currency of their skills. * Wallet-sized cards printed for all staff and students which contain every emergency number essential for referrals of urgent cases involving sexual harassment or violence. * The SCU App has been progressively developed and upgraded to incorporate all safety contacts, protocols and campus maps, and featured the 24-hour 1800 572 224 hotline for sexual assault available nationally. | The University’s Website is currently under review and associated with this review is the development of a new Student Landing Portal. The aim of the portal is to provide clearer triage mechanisms to streamline responsiveness and support systems, pointing students clearly and directly to available resources.  From a central hub called Need Help? students will follow a path (decision tree format) directing them to relevant assistance and support. A pdf of this portal, containing contact information for the University’s Crisis Line and Health Clinics, has recently been sent to all university staff.  Further development of this online resource will now include the recommendations of the *Guidelines for university responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment (the UA Guidelines)*  A new monitoring and evaluation mechanism, that draws together the communication and response pathways of the various services within the university, will be developed by the end of 2018 and ready for use in Orientation Week 2019. |
| 4 In order to ensure that actions taken by universities to prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment are appropriate, within a year of the release of this report, universities should commission an independent, expert-led review of existing university policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment | Policy amendments undertaken in response to the AHRC report include:   * Revisions to the Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Prevention Policy. Changes include: * Clearer definition of ‘harassment’ to include sex, sexual orientation and specific examples given. * More clarity around ‘sexual harassment’ * Student Misconduct Rule amended: definition of Non-academic misconduct includes “any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault”. * Sexual Harassment Guidelines updated. * University Risk Assessment form (Generic Risk Assessment template) updated to include a specific question: *“Have you considered whether there are any risks associated with sexual harassment, violence or assault?”* | Professor Wilks’ priorities include an audit of relevant policies and a SWOT analysis, with specific attention to responsive policy and practices regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment. Separate guidelines and training to support staff in responding to disclosures of sexual violence form part of these priorities.  The response pathways assessment will consider the role and operation of key services within the university, for example:   * Student associations on the different campuses, * Counselling and Psychological support services, * Chaplaincy service, * Student advocacy * Campus security and * Accommodation providers   The assessment will also look at the use of external counselling services such as Bupa’s 24 hour student advice line (available as part of overseas student health cover), the University’s Out of Hours Crisis Support Line **1300 782 676 and any other identified services students may be using in order to assist and support them.** |
| 5 Universities should conduct an assessment to identify staff members and student representatives within their institution most likely to receive disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment.  Universities should ensure that these staff members and student representatives receive training in responding to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual harassment, delivered by an organisation with specialist expertise in this area | An assessment by the Student Safety Taskforce identified three point-of-contact groups for immediate additional training:   * The Counselling Services team were provided with training by specialist sexual assault counsellors from the local health services to increase the currency of their skills * Library staff received training to deal with all types of harassment, including aggressive behaviours * All University staff were given access to a training module on Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence | The University recognises this as a priority area. Discussions with staff confirm that students will often disclose very personal information to their lecturers, including matters of a sexual nature. In addition to online training modules and continued support for counselling and library staff, planned initiatives include:   * Small group seminars for academic staff to discuss their roles and responsibilities in responding to disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment (led by qualified and experienced facilitators) and * Small group seminars for key contact group members, such as: student association staff, UniMentors, UniLife, Campus Living Village staff and senior residential students, Southern Cross Deck and Lounge and Southern Cross Catering and Events staff.   The intention of the seminars is to provide staff and senior students with the skills to respond to disclosures with compassion and the knowledge of specialist services available. |
| 6 Universities should ensure that information about individual disclosures and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment is collected and stored confidentially and used for continuous improvement of processes.  On a regular basis – at least every six months – Vice-Chancellors should be provided with de-identified reports of this data, including any trends or identifiable concerns which arise, along with recommendations for any necessary improvements to processes. | Currently, information and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment are collected and stored confidentially by the university. The Vice Chancellor and Executive receive regular de-identified reports highlighting any concerns. | Working closely with the key service providers and reporting groups across the university (for example, security, Workplace Health and Safety, Risk Management, Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic, chaplaincy, accommodation providers) the Student Safety and Wellbeing advisory board will:   * Review existing reporting mechanisms * Being sensitive to legal and confidentiality requirements, consider ways that disclosures and reports might be collected and stored centrally so that de-identified information pertaining to sexual assaults and sexual harassment is made available to the Vice Chancellor in a timely manner |
| 7 Within six months of this report, but as soon as possible, universities should conduct an audit of university counselling services. | An independent review of the University’s Counselling and Psychological Support Services was conducted in the first half of 2018, with the report submitted mid- 2018.  The terms of reference provide for an:  *“Independent review of the Counselling Service undertaken to ensure that the provision of service is fit for purpose and aligned with sector best practice. The review will also identify further opportunities for development and improvement of the service across the entire student cohort.”* | The report of the independent review of the Counselling Services has recently been submitted to the Vice Chancellor and senior management. It contains a range of recommendations based on stakeholder interviews, a student survey, service data and an external scan comparison of service provision in other similar sized universities. The Vice Chancellor and Executive will consider the recommendations and take action by the end of August. |
| 8 Universities should engage an independent body to conduct the National university student survey of sexual assault and sexual harassment at three yearly intervals to track progress in reducing the prevalence of these incidents at a sector-wide level. | Southern Cross University is absolutely committed to preventing, addressing, and reducing the harm caused by incidents of sexual assault and harassment for those within our care and communities. The University is fully supportive of a national survey to better understand and respond to incidents at a sector-wide level. | Southern Cross University will participate in the follow-up national survey. In addition, the university has committed to taking a national leadership role in the broad area of student safety and wellbeing and will contribute to research and evidence-based practice in the area of sexual assault and sexual harassment. |
| 9 In addition to considering the implementation of the university recommendations made in this report, residential colleges and university residences should commission an independent, expert-led review of the factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in their settings | Currently, mandatory induction/orientation for students at residential accommodation includes:   * Presentations on availability of Counselling and Medical Services * Security services * Chaplaincy services   All Sexual Assaults occurring at CLV residential accommodation are treated as a Level 3 or above incident (see below) with reporting obligations to the University within one hour (Level 3) or immediately (Level 4).  **Level 3: Significant**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Sexual Assault | **Sexual assault** – all incidents of sexual assault, whether or not the sexual assault has been reported to the police |   **Level 4: High**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Sexual Assault | **Sexual assault** – aggravated sexual assault, rape |   A draft Protocol for the University and its accommodation provider for Responding to Sexual Assault Incidents has been completed and is under review. | In addition to the Draft Protocol for Responding to Sexual Assault Incidents, the Student Safety and Wellbeing advisory board is reviewing;   * Published work from other universities on factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in residential colleges; * Legal responsibilities for residential colleges related to sexual assault and sexual harassment; and * Evidence-based initiatives that will reduce the incidence of sexual assault and increase student safety   The findings of this review will facilitate discussions with CLV and other accommodation providers about how they may increase safety and meet their legal obligations in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment. |