



Respect at RMIT

Progress Report

2017 – 2022

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.

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Introduction

This report outlines our progress since the publication in 2017 of the results of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) report into sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities.



**Professor
Alec Cameron**

Vice-Chancellor
and President

Sexual harm is a complex issue affecting societies around the world and, as a community of influence in a great many locations, we have the opportunity and responsibility to make a positive difference.

Genuine change demands a shared commitment right across RMIT to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our people. Importantly, a simultaneous focus on both prevention and response is required. With these goals in mind, I'm pleased to report progress including but not limited to:

- the ongoing work of our Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group on the Prevention of Gender-based Violence;
- the revision of our Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Harm e-learning module, now incorporated into our staff onboarding processes;
- the rollout of a version of the Australian Council of Graduate Research Professional Development Program Respectful Research Training (RRT) for higher degree by research (HDR) supervisors and candidates;
- the 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;
- and the extension of our Safer Community services to staff as well as students, plus ongoing investment in the area.

Our vision for addressing gender-based violence is to ensure RMIT is a safe place for all staff and students; a place where everyone feels included, respected and supported.

Support for those affected by sexual harm is always available at RMIT. Our Safer Community team provides direct support to staff and students disclosing sexual harm and behaviours of concern. We then continue to provide care and support to ensure that staff and students feel empowered to make informed choices.

Looking ahead we must embed a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach to the investigation and case management of sexual harm – to minimise any further distress caused by disclosures or the reporting process. This means our systems, processes and culture must be trusted by all staff and students.

At RMIT, we proudly protect the right of every member of our community to learn, interact and participate in university life, free of fear and safe from harm.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and President, RMIT University

Foreword

We view our roles as Co-chairs of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence as a great responsibility and privilege.



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

We are grateful to Fiona Ellis, formerly Director of Student Services at the University, for her work as Co-chair from 2017 and to many colleagues from across RMIT who have served on this group over the years. We are also grateful to the former Vice-Chancellor, Martin Bean, and the current Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alec Cameron, for giving us direct access and strong executive support.

Recognising that the provision of a safe and respectful environment for staff and students is a whole-of-University responsibility, the Advisory Group draws on expertise from across RMIT, from all colleges and portfolios, and benefits from robust participation by representatives of our student union, RUSU. The Group determines and approves the workplan for actions directed at reducing gender-based violence and enhancing the safety of students and staff across the University, identifies blockers to work being done, and – when needed – escalates issues of concern directly to the Vice-Chancellor.



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

During our time as Co-chairs we have seen a maturing in the response of the University to gender-based violence, and cultural shifts in the emphasis given to these issues. This is now reflected in the additional resourcing being directed to addressing gender-based violence in all of its forms. We recognise that challenges remain for us to address, but feel heartened by progress on key issues.

We both look forward to continuing to work with the University community to make RMIT a safer and more respectful place for all staff and students into the future.

**Professor Denise Cuthbert
Mish Eastman**

**Co-chairs
Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for the Prevention of
Gender-Based Violence**

Foreword

Since the release of *Change the Course* in 2017, RMIT University Student Union (RUSU) Presidents have been advocating for change at RMIT that will keep students safe.



Beth Shegog

RUSU President 2023

I would like to acknowledge the work of these past presidents who championed best practice and centred the experience of students in discussions around respect and safety.

The inclusion of student representatives on the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence has ensured that student voice has been central to driving action in this area. Much of the progress included in this report has been strongly supported by students and the Advisory Group has actively encouraged student representatives to contribute to its goals and direction.

RUSU is proud to have been a part of the discussions around best practice for investigating and case managing formal reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment at RMIT and believe that the changes to these processes, outlined in this progress report, will have a significant impact on the wellbeing of students and staff who choose to make a formal report to the University.

As President for 2023, I look forward to working closely with the University to continue this progress, and to make RMIT a safe, respectful and inclusive place for all.

Beth Shegog
RUSU President 2023

Executive summary

In 2016, at the request of Australia's 39 universities, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) conducted a national, independent survey of university students to gain greater insight into the nature, prevalence and reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities.

RMIT was among the 39 universities represented in the survey. More than 30,000 students across Australia took part.

The resulting report, *Change the Course*, was published in 2017. It was a shocking and sobering read.

Among the national findings were:

- 21 per cent of students were sexually harassed in a university setting, excluding travel to and from university, in 2016.
- 1.6 per cent were sexually assaulted in a university setting, including travel to and from university, on at least one occasion in 2015 or 2016.
- Women were three times as likely as men to have been sexually assaulted, and almost twice as likely as men to have been sexually harassed.
- 94 per cent of students who were sexually harassed and 87 per cent of students who were sexually assaulted did not make a formal report or complaint to their university.

Following publication of *Change the Course* and subsequent introduction of the national campaign *Respect. Now. Always.*, RMIT strengthened its commitment to preventing sexual violence among its community, and to responding better to those who experienced it.

This report sets out the progress made towards these goals since then.

A key step was establishing the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group on Reducing Sexual Harm, which ensured that this important issue was prioritised at the highest level of University governance. This was

underpinned by updates and additions to a raft of policies and procedures, all developed through a victim-centric, trauma-informed lens.

The evolution of how we handle complaints of sexual harm continues. New systems and processes are designed to ensure victim-survivors can access the appropriate support at the right time. A Restorative Engagement Program – believed to be the first of its kind in a university setting – provides a pathway for students and former students who have in the past experienced sexual harm and feel aggrieved about the University's failure to protect them and/or respond appropriately.

Staff and students in leadership positions are being trained so they can better support anyone who discloses an experience of sexual harm to them. Notably, our Respectful Research Training (RRT) program for higher degree by research supervisors and candidates is helping to combat sexual harassment, gender bias and discrimination in research training programs.

Targeted and broad communications campaigns have been implemented to help create a culture of respect at RMIT, and ensure members of our community know where to turn to for help should they experience sexual harm. This is an ongoing piece of work and one that will benefit from significant attention in 2023.

Crucially, we are tackling the root causes of sexual harm with programs like the Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project, which works with men to challenge the societal conditions that allow gender-based violence to exist.

We have invested in support for victim-survivors, and are committed to making it easier for those affected by sexual harm to disclose what has happened, and should they wish, make a formal report.

There are many more examples of our work in this report, but it should be regarded as a baseline. More must, can, and will, be done.

Progress against Action Plan 2017-2020 and Action Plan 2021-2022



Leading change through effective governance

RMIT's commitment to creating a safe, respectful environment starts at the top. Visible leadership from Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor until 2021, his successor, Professor Alec Cameron, and senior leaders right across the University has ensured this issue remains a key focus at RMIT.

The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group on Reducing Sexual Harm was established in 2017, with a broad membership including representatives from frontline student wellbeing services such as Safer Community and counselling, senior leadership, academic staff, security, research, residential services, Academic Registrar's Group, the People team, and RUSU.

The Advisory Group drove the creation of Changing the Course, a three-year (2017-2020) strategic plan and prevention framework to reduce sexual harm, following the national Change the Course report. The plan and framework were widely consulted on prior to endorsement.

In 2020, the Advisory Group expanded its terms of reference to include all forms of gender-based violence, in recognition of the shared drivers of these behaviours. This was reflected in the revised workplan produced for 2021-22.

The Group, now known as the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence, meets quarterly to drive and monitor actions, and to discuss and resolve issues. Its Co-chairs also meet directly with the Vice-Chancellor every six months and with other members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) as the need arises.

Progress is reported via RMIT's website and internal communication channels. RMIT reports progress publicly to the AHRC and other key stakeholders including the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Policies and Procedures

An independent review into University policies and pathways to respond to sexual harm was completed in 2018.

Work on addressing the recommendations started immediately. This included:

- a comprehensive student conduct policy and procedure review and redevelopment to ensure that the student discipline process adopts a trauma-informed approach to sexual harm matters
- an audit of RMIT student clubs and societies, including scrutiny around reporting processes and training for preventing incidents of sexual harm
- a refresh of the Sexual Harassment Policy, replaced in 2022 by a broader Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures covering Australia and Vietnam
- implementation of a Child Safe Policy and Procedures
- development of a Domestic and Family Violence Policy, expected to be approved by the end of 2022
- the creation of a sexual harm risk assessment and management tool for use by Safer Community staff.

Crucially, RMIT processes for responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment of students and staff have been developed to align with victim-centric, trauma-informed practice. It is acknowledged, however, that the lack of a technology platform for the management of reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) incidents across RMIT remains an issue for the University which is now being addressed.

In 2022 RMIT embarked on a University-wide complaints handling project to review the system, process and ultimately the experience of complaints handling for students and staff. As a result, a new complaints handling system, developed in consultation with Internal Audit and Risk teams, will launch in 2023. This will streamline the process for complaints of any type across the University, with a commitment of 'no wrong door' for staff, students and third parties – wherever someone seeks help, they will get help.

Linked to this new complaints handling system will be a specialised response mechanism for handling of reports of sexual harm. When reporting through the new complaints handling system, victim-survivors will be directed to specialist complex case management personnel with subject matter expertise in sexual harm and violence. This specialist team will sit under the umbrella of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team with subject matter oversight by the Safer Community Senior Manager.

Safer Community worked with RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice to introduce a Restorative Engagement Program. This provides a pathway for students and former students who have in the past experienced sexual harm and feel aggrieved about the University's failure to protect them and/or respond appropriately. It gives them an opportunity to meet with senior University representatives to explain the impact of the University's actions (or inaction) on their recovery, sense of identity, studies and careers.

The program is modelled on that delivered by the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce in response to historical cases of sexual assault in the Australian Defence Force, and is believed to be the first ever application of such a process in a university setting.

RMIT will continue to review and refine response pathways. As part of this, we seek to continually extend our networks with relevant expert agencies and researchers with expertise in sexual violence prevention and continuously improve information about internal and external reporting procedures.



Designing in safety

Physical environments cannot be held responsible for encouraging or allowing assaults to take place: any blame lies squarely with the perpetrator.

But we recognise that physical measures can make people feel safer on campus, which contributes to their overall wellbeing.

With that in mind, we carried out a safety risk assessment of our campuses. We subsequently improved lighting, and introduced a free shuttle bus on the Bundoora Campus.

Spotlight:

Our commitment to a specialised response

Every university has to navigate the complexities of providing an appropriate response to every disclosure and report of sexual harm.

At RMIT, the 2018 independent review by KPMG of our processes and procedures around sexual harm, along with the University of Adelaide ICAC Response and the Australian Human Rights Commission Report on Sexual Harm in the Workplace, prompted deep thinking about how we could improve.

In 2021 we developed a discussion paper and started a University-wide conversation on how best to investigate, case manage and determine outcomes for sexual harm and violence.

This led to a future thinking and directions paper that was presented to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive in April 2022, with the proposed structure and resourcing approved the following month.

We are now focused on implementing these changes, to improve outcomes for all victim-survivors. Under the guidance of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence, we are putting further resources into this important area. A new specialist complaints management response system is being introduced, staffed by experts who can apply a trauma-informed approach to the investigation and case management of these complex cases.



Building knowledge and skill

We recognise that within the RMIT community, there are certain groups that may be more likely to receive disclosures of sexual harm. We work continuously to identify these groups and offer targeted training in responding to disclosures.

Since 2017, this training has included:

- face-to-face workshops on responding to disclosures for staff, including those involved in frontline support and student discipline, delivered by CASA (Centre Against Sexual Assault) House
- bystander intervention training for students in clubs, societies, mentoring and leadership roles
- tailored professional development for counselling staff
- Respectful Research Training for research supervisors (since 2020)
- specialist training for the Vice-Chancellor and his executive in responding to sexual assault
- training for Safer Community staff in using the Sexual Harm Assessment of Risk and Manageability Tool.

Several other targeted programs have been piloted, including a consent workshop for international students, Respectful Research Training for higher degree by research (HDR) students, and specialised training in trauma informed practice for Senior Officers in 2022.

The Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Harm e-learning module was launched in 2018 and revised in 2022 and has now been incorporated into staff onboarding processes. It is mandatory for all RMIT staff, except those for whom it may trigger distress.

All students can access a module on how to support someone who discloses sexual harm and are invited to bystander training workshops. A Consent and Respectful Relationships module is also available.

Over the course of 2021 and 2022 RMIT has developed a Respect Capability Framework that details the skills, knowledge and capabilities that we would like our staff and students to build toward in addressing gender-based violence. This work will also allow the future development of training and education programs to be mapped to agreed capabilities.

Targeted training programs will continue to be embedded into an RMIT student leadership framework to continually drive specialist training of society and club officials, mentors and other student leaders.

Aligned to the work progressing the Capability Framework, RMIT will continue to refine and improve the quality of, and increase participation in, the following education programs:

- Consent and Respectful Relationships (all students)
- Bystander Intervention (students, and to be introduced to staff in 2023)
- Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Harm (all staff and student leaders)
- Respectful Research Training (HDR supervisors and candidates).

RMIT is also working with other Victorian universities to share learnings, and resources where possible.

Spotlight:

Respectful Research Training

In 2019, RMIT committed to a comprehensive rollout of the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) professional development program Respectful Research Training (RRT) for higher degree by research (HDR) supervisors and candidates. The program is designed to help combat sexual harassment, gender bias and discrimination in research training programs.

The ACGR materials were customised for the RMIT context with the development of a e-module which is undertaken prior to participation in either online or face-to-face workshops. This professional development program ran intensively in 2021 and 2022 with the aim of reaching all registered HDR supervisors at the University.

RRT has strong executive support at RMIT and completion of the training became a policy requirement for all supervisors in order to take on new candidates from 2022. It is also now a standard component of training for all supervisors new to the University.

To date more than 1400 research supervisors have completed both the e-module and workshop, with workshops occurring twice per month to complete the rollout. This represents 91 per cent of the eligible supervisor population.

There is also a version of the e-module and workshop tailored to the needs of HDR candidates. The School of Graduate Research is rolling this out and plans are in place for robust evaluation of the effectiveness of this program.

The RRT program at RMIT is a successful collaboration between the School of Graduate Research in the Research and Innovation portfolio and the Organisational Development Team in the People portfolio. The program has been progressively refined in response to feedback and evaluation. Despite the challenges entailed in this kind of cultural change work, participant responses to the program continue to be positive, as illustrated in the following comments:

“It was actually really good to have colleagues talking [...] to build on [...] the module and then have reactions of people to the content. So I thought it was a positive experience.”

“[RRT] has made me aware that [...] the supervisory job involves more than just guiding them through the academic side of things.”

“I think of things more. I reflect more and I think that is the greatest value that the training has given me, that the professional development is giving me [...] if it helps me reflect, if it makes me reflect on what I am doing, then it has achieved its aim.”

The RRT program has attracted attention in the United States, with the program leads invited to present on their work at the National Academy of Science Engineering and Medicine Summit on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education in October 2020, and also in Australia, with invitations to speak to colleagues at other universities on the distinctive features of the program and learnings gained from its rollout.



Spotlight:

Respect Capability Framework

Education and building the capability of staff and students is a critical element in the prevention of gender-based violence, specifically sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Respect Capability Framework is being developed with this in mind.

It demonstrates the University's ongoing commitment not only to gender equality but also to Changing the Course, to Respect. Now. Always., and to implementing the TEQSA Guidance Note: Wellbeing and Safety for best-practice response to gender-based violence and sexual harm. It also helps us deliver on our commitments in the 2022-2025 Gender Equality Action Plan.

To our knowledge, there is no equivalent capability framework at other Victorian universities within the Respect. Now. Always. space.

At the time of publication, extensive consultation on the Capability Framework was underway. The draft currently outlines four pillars of capability to facilitate change and promote gender equality in three levels – foundational, intermediate, and advanced. The pillars include the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to apply and support:

- competence in understanding and transforming gender inequality, including applying a gender lens to decision-making, policies, programs and services to ensure equal outcomes for all
- the ability to understand intersectionality, power and allyship to challenge multiple and intersecting forms of power, privilege, inequality and oppression through allyship for social justice
- the set of capabilities to effectively prevent and respond to different gendered harms within Australian society and RMIT, and
- the capability to foster and promote a community of care and psychological safety through respectful relationships and ethical behaviour.

RMIT is keen to share the draft framework and any learnings with industry partners, including Our Watch, and other universities through the Tertiary Primary Prevention Network.

Driving awareness and behaviour change

Creating awareness of support services

When someone experiences sexual harm, it's crucial that they know where to turn for help. Our websites are often the first port of call, and following the AHRC report, staff, student and public websites were updated to make information on how to report sexual harm and how to access support easier to find. Subsequent website updates have further enhanced the information.

In 2018, we launched the Be the Change communication and engagement campaign. It was designed in collaboration with students and ran each semester until 2020.

The campaign initially focused on bystander action. It aimed to empower students to not walk past bad behaviour, know where to report it, and to work together to create a safer community.

In 2019 the commitment was taken a step further, asking the RMIT community to make a public pledge to change our culture for the better. With strong, visible support from RMIT's student and staff leaders, and building on the awareness raised by previous campaigns, RMIT received more than 450 commitment statements.

While campaigns like Be the Change highlight support services, it is important that we take an 'always-on' approach to advertising their availability through all possible channels.

We take advantage of key points in the year – for example, when welcome emails are sent to new students – to distribute information about Safer Community and other supports. We issue communications to mark relevant dates in the calendar, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

RMIT Safer Community team members attend student orientation events each semester to build student awareness of reporting processes and support services available.

Print materials around key campaign messages, including how to respond to disclosures and seek support, have been provided to staff and targeted leadership groups each year.

Every announcement relating to sexual harm or respect – for example when a new policy or procedure is introduced – is accompanied by details of where staff and/or students can find support.

We regularly review reporting and help-seeking behaviour from students to evaluate whether there is increased awareness of support services, but despite our best efforts, the evidence suggests more needs to be done. Data from the 2021 National Student Safety Survey indicated that a high proportion of the student population still do not know where to access support.

RMIT will continue to reinforce and refine messaging about Safer Community as the single point of contact for support and reporting through regular communications and attendance at key events, including orientation.

A new communication and engagement campaign to replace Be the Change is in development for implementation in 2023. Its focus will be on Safer Community and respect messaging, in line with that developed by Universities Australia and Our Watch.



Tackling the root causes of gender-based violence

Communications and training modules certainly play a role in creating a more respectful community.

However, we recognise that more can always be done. We must understand and challenge the complex social conditions that allow disrespect, gender inequality and gender-based violence to exist, and embed the requirement for respect throughout University activities.

The Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project is just one way we are approaching this issue. Over two years (January 2022 to December 2023), the project is applying a range of innovative health promotion and social justice approaches. It is informed by four key resources, three produced by Our Watch – Educating for Equality (2021), Respect and Equality in TAFE (2021) and Men in Focus Practice Guide (2022) – and Rainbow Health Victoria's Pride in Prevention (2020).

The project's focus from mid-2022 has been on creating consciousness-raising events and student engagement activities that actively name the issue (violence and sexual harm), seek to empower students to step forward and work towards solutions, and help them become aware of supports offered by the University. These activities have targeted key themes such as giving voice to the truth, gathering interested people to join as allies and growing a gender transformative culture at RMIT that challenges norms and behaviours that contribute to inequality and violence.

This work is supported by prominent information on RMIT staff, student and public websites, and in other communications, about the University's commitment to safe, respectful behaviours.

Spotlight:

Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project

Violence is a significant global issue – and it is impossible to separate gender from the problem.

In Australia alone, 95 per cent of all victim survivors of violence (regardless of their gender), experience that violence from a male perpetrator (Our Watch, Men in Focus 2022).

Violence-supporting attitudes are embedded in our wider society. We see this through accepted norms and behaviours that both police and enforce ideas regarding gender and sexuality.

Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity (the binary) are leading causes of violence against women, gender and sexually diverse and non-binary peoples and this contributes to overall gender inequality, which is entrenched in our institutions, structures and processes (Our Watch, Educating for Equality 2021). These rigid and outdated ideas also contribute to identifying men reporting poorer mental and overall health outcomes and higher rates of suicide completion.

The Gender Equity and Justice – Community, Teaching and Learning Project is taking a whole-of-RMIT approach to challenging the social and educational conditions that allow disrespect, gender inequality and gender-based violence to exist.

The project has three key streams or target areas across higher education (HE) and vocational education (VE):

- HE/VE student facing events and activities – applying an allyship model
- VE learning and curriculum – what students are taught
- VE teaching and support – how students are taught and what teachers need.

The Working Together with Men model, which has been evaluated as promising practice for engaging men in universities and VE settings, will be applied in partnership with Melbourne City Council staff alongside RMIT higher and vocational education students. Interested men will be trained as gender equity allies and undertake small-scale prevention projects across the City of Melbourne and RMIT campuses.

The project is also working with industry and unions to target key learning areas and curriculum in VE in male-dominated trades that relates to student work readiness. Issues such as gender-based violence, psychosocial harm, suicide, bullying and racism are all challenges that students are likely to face in the professional environment and are currently not included in trades courses.

The aim is to not only create change in the life of the project within the student community, but to create sustainable evaluation and learning tools that can be permanently embedded into RMIT pedagogy, alongside staff training and supports.



Supporting victim-survivors

Support for those affected by sexual harm is always available at RMIT. Response pathways are designed to be victim-centric and trauma-informed by experienced and informed staff, to minimise any further distress caused by the disclosure or reporting process.

Safer Community has for many years provided a single point of contact for any student wishing to disclose and seek support for sexual harm or, indeed, any unwanted or threatening behaviour.

It aims to provide a physically and psychologically safe environment to ensure that staff and students feel empowered to make informed choices, and have control over their decision-making. This can ameliorate the impact of the loss of agency they have experienced through sexual violence and promote their longer-term recovery from trauma. Actively supporting those impacted by violence to identify their resources, skills and networks for support promotes an internal sense of hope for the future and for recovery.

A CASA House worker was funded to support students on campus for the period immediately following the publication of the 2016 AHRC survey results. This boosted the support already available when there was a national focus on issues of sexual harm that may have led to an increase in support-seeking.

Since then, investment in Safer Community has continued. In 2021 the service was expanded to provide direct support to staff disclosing sexual harm and behaviours of concern, as well as students.

An anonymous reporting portal was also introduced in May 2022 to provide additional mechanisms for staff and students to report inappropriate behaviours and conduct.

RMIT is in the process of securing a centralised technology platform for capturing and case managing sexual harm information and disclosures. This will help ensure transparent data collection and reporting on the prevalence of sexual harm within our University community. This will allow us to drive and, in time, map our progress on gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.

An audit of RMIT's counselling support was completed within six months of the AHRC report. It indicated that service levels were appropriate and timely, but this is something we continue to monitor.

Students who have experienced sexual harm are prioritised for appointments with RMIT counsellors and specialist professional development for student counsellors has been delivered by CASA House.



Spotlight:

Sexual Harm Assessment of Risk and Manageability Tool

The Sexual Harm Assessment of Risk and Manageability Tool (ARMT) was developed in collaboration with consultant forensic psychologist Dr Karla Lopez MAPS and in consultation with various areas of the University. Draft work began in late 2021 and the tool was finalised in June 2022.

The focus of the ARMT is to identify any static and dynamic risk factors that may have led to a sexual harm incident and which remain in existence, so that meaningful interventions can be devised and implemented.

The Safer Community team applies the ARMT to all reports or disclosures of sexual harm that the University receives. It helps to identify and record risks across three areas – the person affected by the sexual harm, the respondent (or alleged perpetrator) and the University context.

The tool helps in identifying physical and psychological risks to the affected person, as well as risks to the broader community, which RMIT has a responsibility to manage appropriately. It can also assess any ongoing vulnerabilities of the affected person which place them at further risk of victimisation.

It can highlight the presence of evidence-based factors that signal the likelihood that the respondent remains a threat, and enables assessment of any contextual risks or environmental vulnerabilities within the University which may contribute to facilitating a further incident.

It also has the potential to strengthen collaboration between different areas of the University by identifying specific factors that lead to sexual harm and highlighting which area is best equipped to address them.

Ultimately, using ARMT enables Safer Community to clearly identify and record outstanding risks – providing a sound foundation for a tailored risk management plan for the affected person, and a considered plan for mitigating any risk posed by the respondent.

