

22 April 2019

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Kate Jenkins  
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Australian Human Rights Commission  
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Dear Ms Jenkins,



I write in response to your letter dated 14 February 2019.

Since the release of *Change the Course*, The University of Queensland (UQ) has continued our commitment to fostering a safe and respectful environment on all UQ campuses by ensuring our students have access to timely and adequate systems of support.

Consistent with the report's recommendations, we have implemented a series of initiatives including:

- A comprehensive review of our policies, procedures and systems to facilitate improved reporting and support mechanisms; and
- Establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit where specially trained staff provide survivors with a supportive and safe place to obtain advice, psychological support and counselling.

The Unit is supported by a full-time Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Coordinator who works closely with the Unit to develop strategic prevention techniques in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. These techniques include:

- Developing and improving education campaigns which focus on prevention and appropriate responses to reports of unacceptable behaviour; and
- Updating training initiatives to target student leaders, vulnerable groups and residential college assistants.

In addition, there is a First Responder Network of around 40 people, mostly university staff, who also provide a safe and supportive place for survivors to confidentially disclose their experience.

The attached report outlines in detail, UQ's ongoing work in response to the recommendations in *Change the Course*. I am encouraged that progress has been made, but I also acknowledge that we still have more to do. I would like to thank you and the Australia Human Rights Commission team for working with us as we continue this important work.

Yours sincerely



Professor Peter Høj AC  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

*Attachment: The University of Queensland 18-month report in response to recommendations*

D19/21163-5

**The University of Queensland 18-month report in response to recommendations from *Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities***

Recommendation No.	Action already taken (as of March 2019)	Planned/future action
<p><b>1</b> Vice-Chancellors take direct responsibility to implement recommendations, including decision-making and monitoring and evaluation of actions taken. Establish an advisory body. Develop an action plan.</p>	<p>UQ Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Peter Høj AC established and led the Sexual Assault Working Group in 2016, which developed and operationalised an action plan prior to the report's release in August 2017. The action plan included the establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMSU), which provides a single point of contact for students wanting to make disclosures, reports and/or access support. This was established in July 2017 and includes three counselling staff, who work closely with our full-time Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Coordinator.</p> <p>During, and since the report's release, Professor Høj AC has been very clear about the University's zero tolerance stance on sexual assault and harassment. Professor Høj AC released a public response to the <i>Change the Course</i> report on 28 July 2018 and has committed to leadership and action in responding to and preventing sexual assault and harassment at UQ. He has been quoted by national and international media.</p> <p>The Working Group was absorbed into a VC Advisory Group in late 2017 which is responsible for reporting the sexual assault and harassment data and identifying opportunities for development /progress. The Advisory Group has a number of subject matter experts and external support to ensure the Vice-Chancellor and UQ make informed improvements.</p>	<p>The VC Advisory Group will continue to meet twice yearly to provide updates on data from the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMSU) and identify appropriate actions. Of particular focus in 2019 will be the development and launch of a sexual misconduct response and prevention action plan that will focus on strengthening education and behaviour change initiatives across UQ campuses.</p>
<p><b>2</b> Universities develop a plan for addressing the drivers of sexual assault and sexual harassment that includes education programs, and identifies existing resources and communications campaigns that reinforce key messages</p>	<p>The SMSU leads action on education, training and support for staff and students. The SMSU has developed and delivered a range of evidence informed, face-to-face training with staff and students, including the Sexual Misconduct 101 training that provides information and education about what constitutes sexual misconduct, how to support students and colleagues who have experienced sexual misconduct, the drivers of sexual assault, harassment and violence against women. Students at affiliated colleges have participated in the ethical bystander training. This training focuses on the key drivers of sexual assault and violence and provides</p>	<p>The SMSU, in collaboration with the Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Coordinator, will: continue to deliver current activities and establish an enhanced training program; release a new educational campaign in collaboration with the UQ Union; and further develop prevention techniques and strategies. These activities will be underpinned by the sexual misconduct response and prevention action plan, due for release in July 2019.</p>

<b>Recommendation No.</b>	<b>Action already taken (as of March 2019)</b>	<b>Planned/future action</b>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><i>Universities should ensure students and staff know about support services and reporting processes for sexual assault or sexual harassment</i></p>	<p>students with practical approaches when witnessing a potential act of sexual misconduct.</p> <p>The Consent Matters module, as well as other educational campaigns have been made available to all students and staff and widely promoted across multiple platforms. A number of affiliated residential colleges have made the online module compulsory for their residents. A full-time Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Coordinator has been appointed to develop and implement ongoing educational campaigns to address the drivers of violence within our community.</p> <p>The UQ Respect website was launched at the end of July 2017. It contains online resources and clear guidance for students and staff.</p> <p>The Sexual Misconduct 101 staff training presents the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures to staff and includes in-depth discussions around reporting processes and systems of support.</p> <p>A supporting awareness campaign was developed (including emails, posters, and forums) to generate awareness of the website and the SMSU. A <i>Help a Survivor</i> guide was published online and print copies were physically distributed across all campuses.</p> <p>Within web resources, an improved SEO (search engine optimisation) of the Student Charter and Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy has assisted in making this information more readily located.</p>	<p>Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation of training and campaign activities will be implemented to track the reach and impact of future campaigns such as Sexual Misconduct 101 and Ethical Bystander training.</p> <p>A student companion document outlining UQ's Sexual Misconduct Procedures will be developed and distributed across all campuses as a follow-up to the <i>Help a Survivor</i> guide.</p> <p>UQ Union will be engaged to raise student awareness of the Policy and Procedures to students.</p> <p>The Policy, revised Procedures and updated companion document will be distributed to all staff via email, while face-to-face training for staff in student-facing roles will continue.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><i>Within a year, universities should commission an independent, expert led review of existing university policies and response pathways in relation to sexual assault and sexual harassment, to assess effectiveness and make</i></p>	<p>The new Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures, published in October 2017, were developed with insight from subject matter experts as well as an independent law firm and were aligned to the advice provided by Universities Australia.</p> <p>An internal operational review of the new Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures was conducted at the end of 2018, and included input from the student community. In line with recommendations from this review, revised Procedures are to be published in April 2019. The Sexual Misconduct</p>	<p>The Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures will be reviewed every 3 years.</p>

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<p><b>5</b> 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 and ensure those identified receive appropriate training.</p>	<p>Policy and Procedures is consistent with policy and procedures models/advice provided by Universities Australia.</p> <p>Starting in early 2017, the Sexual Assault Working Group and then SMSU identified staff and students who were likely to receive disclosures. These individuals received training prior to the release of <i>Change the Course</i>. The focus of training for students was through partnerships with the UQ Union and other established student networks, including through the Residential Colleges Student Leader network.</p> <p>UQ developed the First Responder Network (FRN) that is made up of members of the UQ community who have been trained in trauma-informed responses to disclosures of sexual misconduct. FRN initially comprised 27 members including cross-faculty academic staff, student services staff, and key student advocacy group members such as UQ Ally.</p> <p>Staff in student-facing roles all received a booklet from the SMSU with guidance on how to best respond to a disclosure. The UQ Respect Website has also been widely communicated to all staff and students.</p>	<p>The First Responder Network will continue to expand throughout the coming years.</p> <p>Training to student representatives will continue to be enhanced throughout the coming years.</p> <p>Basic information about trauma-informed responses will be promoted to staff and students across the UQ community.</p>
<p><b>6</b> 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.</p>	<p>Confidential case management and reporting systems have been established to collect and store information. In 2018, these systems were reviewed and monthly data are now collated and presented to the VC on a 6-monthly basis.</p> <p>The data are reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year to inform the development of educational campaigns, training, and prevention methods relating to sexual violence.</p>	<p>Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation will be implemented to track outcomes of these activities. The data collection and reporting systems will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p><b>7</b> Within six months of this report, universities should conduct an audit of university counselling services to assess adequacy</p>	<p>General counselling services for students were reviewed to ensure adequate capacity both prior to and following release of the report. Specific resource was assigned to enable specialist training and specialist response and proactive educational campaigns. Training of the counselling team was completed to ensure the team adopted a trauma-informed approach to supporting survivors.</p>	<p>Counselling and SMSU data will continue to be reviewed and reported and ensure appropriate capacity and adequate training. All crisis-support line staff will receive comprehensive sexual misconduct support training.</p>

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<p><b>8</b></p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>A full-time sexual misconduct counsellor has been appointed and specialist counsellors of the SMSU have daily availability for students and staff at UQ to access support.</p> <p>UQ launched a 24/7 crisis support line for students from Monday 16 July 2018. This improvement will ensure that our student community will be able to access counselling or crisis support, irrespective of the time.</p> <p>Counselling team and SMSU visits are reported to senior leadership on a regular basis to ensure appropriate capacity.</p> <p>UQ commits to continued participation and engagement in National surveys via Universities Australia.</p>	<p>Future options and proposals to be discussed among the VC Advisory Group.</p>
<p><b>9</b></p> <p><i>Residential colleges and university residences should consider implementing report recommendations, and commission an independent, expert-led review of the factors which contribute to sexual assault and sexual harassment in their settings.</i></p>	<p>UQ senior leadership meet with the Heads of College regularly to address the underlying and contributing factors that may lead to sexual misconduct.</p> <p>Residential college staff have attended the Sexual Misconduct 101 training.</p> <p>Expert led consent and ethical bystander training continues to be delivered to residential student executive leaders. Most residential colleges are now delivering some form of training for residents in consent and bystander education on a regular basis.</p>	<p>All residential colleges are engaging with the University proactively and there are ongoing meetings between residential colleges and UQ Leadership to resolve legal and privacy issues.</p> <p>The options and capacity to extend ethical bystander training to all first year students across the colleges will be explored.</p>