



# Safe Campuses

## Annual Report 2023



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# Safe and respectful communities

All members of our University community have the right to be safe, feel safe, and be treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

Griffith's Safe Campuses initiative was established as a commitment to address recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course: Report into Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault in Australian Universities (2017)*. The initiative continues to promote a safe and respectful University community, providing digital and physical resources and training to support sexual harm prevention, reporting and response.

Appropriately, the prevention of and response to sexual harm continues to attract attention from within and outside the higher education sector. This is highlighted as a priority action area in the *Universities Accord Interim Report* and, more broadly, through legislative changes arising from the *Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces (2020)* introducing a positive duty on employers to eliminate workplace sexual harassment and discrimination.

Through Universities Australia, the sector has committed to another national student safety survey in 2024, and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is currently reshaping its *Good Practice Note: Preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Australian higher education sector (2020)*. TEQSA has also indicated more robust measures will be implemented in response to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee report on Current and Proposed Consent Laws.

## The year in review

As reported in 2022, results of the 2021 National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) indicated that Griffith University students had experienced higher rates of sexual assault (2.1%) and sexual harassment (12.8%) related to their university experience in the previous 12 months, compared with the national average. Spaces on campus, including libraries, teaching and learning spaces and common areas such as carparks, walkways, bathrooms and student lounges, were noted as hotspots for sexual harassment. The survey highlighted the need for continued efforts to prevent harmful behaviours within the community and support those affected. Griffith has progressed work under the following focus areas in response to the NSSS results and issues highlighted more broadly across the sector.

## Enhancing a sense of safety at Griffith

### 24/7 Study Spaces

A Safety and Security study conducted in mid-2022 found that students feel safest in highly activated areas on campus where the Campus Support Team are prominent. To enhance the visibility of and access to Campus Support services, the security teams were relocated to central Library spaces at Nathan and Gold Coast campuses in 2023, coinciding with the launch of the 24/7 Study Spaces pilot program.

The pilot program centralised previously distributed study spaces to 24/7 Gold Coast and Nathan libraries hubs. To enable safe and secure access for students. The program addresses the unique challenges of providing round-the-clock access to study spaces without compromising the safety of students using the facility. The Campus Support team has noted improvement in overall safety since the pilot program's implementation, with security incidents reduced compared to the former distributed study space model, fostering an atmosphere of trust and well-being among students and staff.

### Security escort service

The study also indicated that students' sense of safety is lower around the outskirts of our campuses, including carparks and pathways that border bushland. To aid in moving across and off campus safely after hours, students and staff are encouraged to contact the Campus Support Team to arrange a security escort. An after-hours shuttle bus service is also available to travel to local drop-off points near the Gold Coast and Nathan campuses. These services are promoted on the Safe Campuses website.

# Understanding the barriers to reporting and support-seeking

## Safe and Respectful Communities study

Student Life conducted a Safe and Respectful Communities study in late 2022 with 106 students and 23 staff participants. The study sought to better understand some of the issues raised by Griffith students in the 2021 national survey. Specifically, how the University could improve awareness of reporting and support-seeking options, how students and staff currently respond to a range of harmful behaviours, and what the Griffith community considered a 'serious enough' incident or behaviour to report to the University formally.

The study provided valuable insights into current responses from students and staff, including the use of positive bystander interventions across a range of less harmful behaviours and a predicted trend of engaging with external support and reporting options instead of, or in addition to, University supports. While general health and wellbeing support awareness was high across participants, this was not true for sexual harm-specific services and resources.

## Strengthening responses

### Policy transformation

The review and redesign of Griffith's sexual harm policy aims to clarify expectations and strengthen prevention and response across the University community. The proposed Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy provides clear expectations for providing a safe and respectful place of work and study and for the conduct of University staff, students and leaders. The Policy is supported by the proposed Student Reports of Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Harm Procedure, which sets out clear pathways for students to report concerns and access support.

### Behavioural risk management

In late 2022, the Student Safety and Wellbeing team was established to strengthen the University's response to concerning, threatening or inappropriate student behaviours, including sexual harm. The team works closely with academic and professional colleagues and health and wellbeing practitioners to address immediate safety concerns, advise on strategies to manage concerning behaviours and support those impacted.

Student Safety and Wellbeing also support the work of the Behavioural Risk Team by providing a central point of contact for staff to raise issues about concerning student behaviour. Convened by the Provost, the Behavioural Risk Team brings together multidisciplinary expertise across the University to address adverse student behavioural concerns using a risk-based framework.

### Support pathways

The University offers students various options to seek support and disclose incidents of sexual harm, bullying, harassment or discrimination. In addition to the Student Safety and Wellbeing team, students can access 24/7 crisis support through the Griffith Mental Wellbeing Support Line. Health, medical, counselling, wellbeing and chaplaincy services are also available, including priority access to counselling support through the Counsellor, Violence Response and Prevention. The Workplace Wellbeing and Counselling Program supports staff, and both staff and students can receive information and referral support from the SASH Responder and Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer networks.

## Fostering safe and respectful communities

### Resources and collaboration

The Safe Campuses website provides a digital space where students and staff can locate information about reporting, responding to and preventing sexual harm, including sexual assault and sexual harassment. The site includes FAQs, tip sheets, contact points for reporting and support and links to prevention and response training programs.

In addition to the digital space, the University provides a range of in-person support options for students, anonymous and identified reporting options, and on-campus signage promoting the steps to *Recognise* and *Respond* to sexual harm and *Refer* affected individuals to reporting and support.



## Education and training

Safe Campuses fosters an integrated approach across the University, sharing research opportunities with the Disrupting Violence Beacon and promoting the MATE Bystander suite of primary prevention education programs. In 2023, Safe Campuses and MATE partnered to provide training to three Griffith staff, enabling the delivery of free-of-charge, face-to-face MATE Bystander workshops to the University community.

Student Life works with a range of areas across the University in designing and delivering up-to-date, tailored education programs for students and staff. Over the past year, *Recognise. Respond. Refer.* workshops have been delivered to students, student leaders and staff across the Student Clubs and Associations, Griffith Graduate Research School, Campus Living Village and Marketing and Communications, providing skills, knowledge and confidence to respond effectively to disclosures of sexual harm and violence. Additionally, staff have access to the *Recognise. Respond. Refer.* online module, including during onboarding.

In 2023, the Counsellors, Violence Response and Prevention delivered in-lecture sessions on sexual harm and vicarious trauma to students in Criminology, Law and Midwifery, provided information bites on healthy communication and boundaries at wellbeing events, and continued to roll out the Respectful Relationships group program for female-identifying students.

Professional development and refresher training has been provided to Griffith's Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officers, including a session on responding to disclosures of sexual assault and harassment. A new Equal Opportunity (EO) online module has also been introduced for staff covering sexual harassment, sexual relationships and conflicts of interest or an abuse of trust and responding to behaviours of concern.

Although the University's results from the 2023 People at Work (R we OK?) psychosocial survey for staff were rated at "minimal concern", Health Safety and Wellbeing continue to meet with work areas across the University to discuss the survey results, identify risks, including those around bullying, harassment and discrimination, and provide strategies for improvement.

## Sector collaboration

### Universities Australia Good Practice Guide

In July 2023, Universities Australia (UA) launched the '[Primary Prevention of Sexual Harm in the University Sector](#)' [Good Practice Guide](#). The Guide resulted from a collaboration between the Department of Social Services, Universities Australia and a Working Group of sexual harm prevention practitioners from ten representative universities, including Griffith. Other institutions included Charles Darwin University, Deakin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Monash University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, University of Technology Sydney and Western Sydney University.

The Guide aims to drive collaboration within institutions and across the sector, supporting practitioners to progress their work in dismantling the values, norms, practices, and structures that enable sexual harm in our University communities. Griffith's MATE Bystander program and Be There App are highlighted as good practice examples within the Guide. The Guide has been well received by sector colleagues and aims to provide ongoing collaboration and information-sharing opportunities between safe/respectful community teams across different states, regions and institutions.

The University significantly contributed to Section Two of the Guide – *Student Voice*, in partnership with Murdoch University, University of Technology Sydney and Western Sydney University. This section encourages universities to consult with their communities when determining which primary prevention initiatives will be most effective and impactful.

### Australasian Universities Safer Communities Symposium

Griffith continued its membership on the Australasian Universities Safer Communities Symposium's Local Organising Committee (LOC) in 2022 and 2023. The annual symposium provides an opportunity for safer communities and student support staff across the sector to connect on challenges and best practice initiatives in promoting respectful communities, prevention and response to sexual harm.

The 2022 symposium '*Promising Practice: Prevention and Response*', hosted online and at in-person hubs in some regions, was attended by over 120 colleagues from across the sector. In addition to LOC engagement and participants from Counselling and Wellbeing, Griffith was also represented on the program with speakers from both the MATE Bystander team and Student Life, encouraging engagement with bystander interventions and MATE's Be There App and showcasing leading practice in Student Voice. The 2023 symposium will again be hosted online and at regional hubs in

November. The theme for the 2023 event is 'From Challenges to Solutions: Creating a Safer Environment for University Students'.

## Reporting data

In this reporting period, new measures have been introduced, such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination reports, referral pathways, and the percentage of disclosures of harm related to the University to the Student Counselling and Wellbeing service.

The University receives disclosures and reports of sexual harm, bullying, harassment and discrimination across various pathways, recognising that victim-survivors face a range of barriers to engaging in formal reporting and support-seeking. The Report a Concern form is the main entry point for staff, students and members of the public to formalise concerns. However, staff may report directly to Human Resources, and students may choose to access support through services such as the Personal Violence Counsellors, Student Safety and Wellbeing or other staff before or instead of providing a written report. Students may also seek assistance from the Campus Support Team for recent or current behavioural incidents. As a result, multiple reports may be received about the same incident via different reporting pathways.

All data provided below is based on reported behaviour and not substantiated findings.

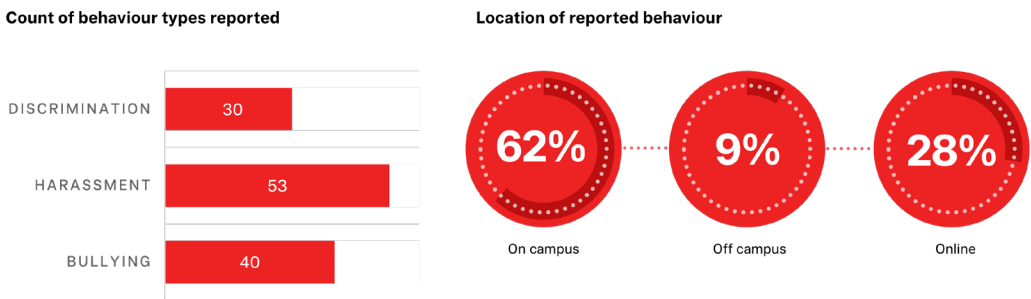
### Report a Concern

Concerns submitted via Report a Concern may be informal disclosures for noting and referral to support or formal reports for further enquiry and response. Reports may be submitted anonymously or may be identified.

#### Bullying, harassment and discrimination

A total of 94 reports of bullying, harassment or discrimination were received from staff, students and members of the public during the reporting period. Almost 80% of reports were submitted by students, 14% by staff (which may involve reporting on behalf of students), with members of the public or unknown complainants submitting the remaining reports. As reflected in the numbers below, just under 30% of reports included concerns about more than one behaviour type.

*Report a Concern: Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination submissions 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023*

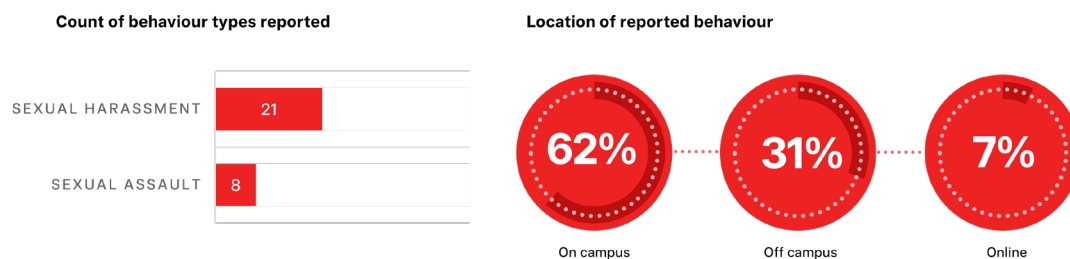


#### Sexual harm

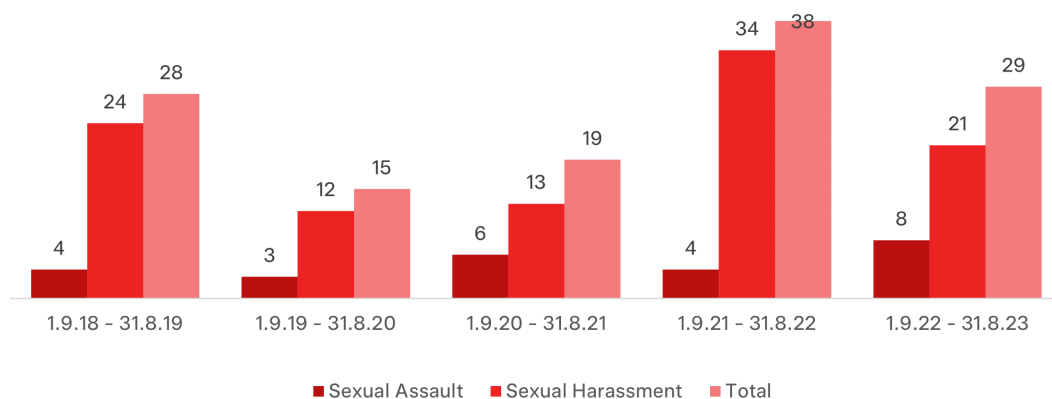
Overall, SASH-related submissions decreased this reporting period, with 29 reports versus 36 the previous year. The graph below provides a breakdown of sexual harm reports and the location of alleged behaviours during this reporting period. Most reports were received from students, although staff and an individual external to the University also submitted concerns. Almost 40% of respondents relating to reports of sexual harm were neither students nor staff of the University.

Approximately 20% of reports were not within the University's jurisdiction; for example, the respondent was not a current student or staff member, an informal disclosure was made, or the reporter did not wish to escalate the matter. Referrals to support services were offered in the majority of cases. Just over a third of sexual harm reports were referred to a student misconduct or staff process for investigation.

## Report a Concern: Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault submissions 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023



## Report a Concern: Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Statistics 2018 – 2023



## Human Resources

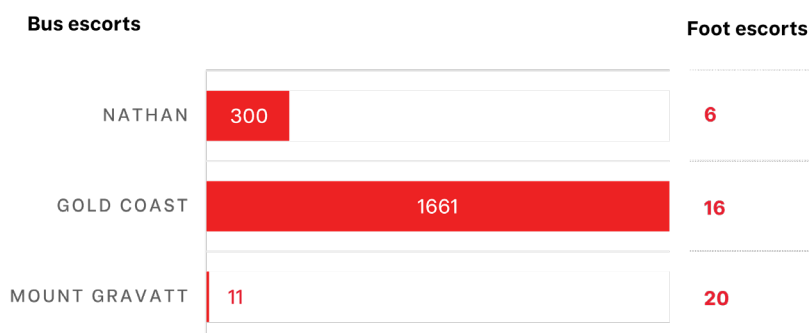
Human Resources receives staff complaints via Report a Concern and directly from staff. Three reports of sexual assault or sexual harassment and 16 reports related to bullying, harassment and discrimination were recorded by Human Resources during the reporting period.

## Campus Support reports

During the reporting period, 907 incidents were reported to the Campus Support team. Incidents range from behavioural concerns to damage, first aid, security observations, fire alarm activations, theft and vehicle incidents. During the reporting period, there were no incidents related to sexual assault, though five related to verbal assault, six to physical assault/stalking and 68 to aberrant behaviour.

The University supports student and staff safety on campus by providing security escort and night bus services. Bus services are available at Nathan, Gold Coast and Mount Gravatt. Escort services are available at all campuses. These services were accessed on almost 2,000 occasions across the reporting period, with over 1,900 night bus services used. The tables below show the distribution of service uptake across Nathan, Mount Gravatt and the Gold Coast.

### Security service access by campus 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023



## Student Safety and Wellbeing

Student Safety and Wellbeing received 99 student referrals between November 2022 and August 2023. Of these referrals, 9% (nine) were reports or disclosures related to sexual harm (sexual assault, sexual harassment, or stalking). For all cases, the person engaging in harmful behaviour was identified as male, and the victim-survivor was identified as female. Additionally, 32 complaints of bullying, harassment and discrimination were referred to Student Safety and Wellbeing.

## Student Counselling and Wellbeing

The table below shows the yearly trend across key statistics from 2018-2023. The data shows that the majority of students (83%) disclosing personal violence identify as female, and almost two-thirds of disclosures (62.5%) relate to sexual assault, rape or domestic violence. Further, most disclosures (85%) made to Counselling and Wellbeing relate to students seeking support for harm experienced outside of the University environment, which is impacting their studies.

In addition to on-campus services, students can access 24/7 immediate and crisis support through the Griffith Mental Wellbeing Support Line. The 24/7 support service provides referral back to the University or other support services as requested by the student. Griffith students sought support on 699 occasions during the reporting period, down from 743 in the previous year. Reporting data for the period 1.9.22 to 31.8.23 indicates that 173 contacts (25%) related to issues including family and relationship, abuse and trauma, sexual assault and other violence.

*Student Counselling and Wellbeing Sexual Harm Statistics 2018 – 2023*

Measure	Period 1.9.18 – 31.8.19	Period 1.9.19 – 31.8.20	Period 1.9.20 – 31.8.21	Period 1.9.21 – 31.8.22	Period 1.9.22 – 31.8.23
# unique clients referencing personal violence	194	226	235	195	211
# incidents of personal violence referenced	249	190	184	233	294
# clients reporting more than one type of violence	90	8	10	9	33
% references to University-related harm^	-	-	-	-	15%
% references not related to University^	-	-	-	-	85%
% disclosures from female students	89.6%	84%	81.3%	85%	83.4%
% disclosures made by international students	15.4%	29%	22.6%	21%	27%
% incidents reported to police	20.8%	27%	26.4%	23%	28%
% violence type = sexual assault, rape or domestic violence	80.3%	90%	60%	38%	62.5%
% violence type = childhood sexual abuse	12.1%	8%	9.4%	10%	13.3%
% violence type = sexual harassment	7.6%	6%	8.9%	9%	7%
% timing of incident = within past month	46.1%	42%	18.3%	18%	21.3%
% timing of incident = one to twelve months	20.3%	37%	7.7%	8%	20%
% timing of incident = over one year ago	33.6%	38%	33.2%	36%	40.3%
% timing of incident = not disclosed	18.9%	8%	0%	6%	8.5%



# support contacts to 24/7 wellbeing support line*	377	453	676	743	699
# support contacts related to relationship, abuse and sexual harm*	81	89	194	209	173

<sup>^</sup>New statistic captured in 2023.

\*Service was expanded from after-hours to 24/7 in February 2020

# The year ahead

## Safe and Respectful Communities Working Group

To strengthen leadership in sexual harm prevention and response, a dedicated Working Group will be established to identify challenges and opportunities, oversee the implementation of policy and University-wide initiatives and monitor outcomes. Chaired by the Provost, the Working Group will include student representatives and experts from Student Life, Student Safety and Wellbeing, Health Safety and Wellbeing and other relevant areas across the University.

## Safe Campuses refresh

The University's Safe Campuses initiative continues to improve and evolve to provide a central point for up-to-date information and education for students and staff. As highlighted in the Safe and Respectful Communities study results, improvements are required across the Safe Campuses suite of communications and content to ensure students can more easily find and recognise information about support services, resources, disclosure and reporting avenues.

The insights gained through the Safe and Respectful Communities study are helping inform an extensive review of the Safe Campuses website, collateral and communications campaigns. The Program Coordinator, Respectful Communities, is working with the Marketing and Communications team to complete a comprehensive review and redesign of the Safe Campuses site by the end of 2023. The updated website will provide improved user experience and easier access to information. It will be complemented by a broader review and revamp of signage, collateral and branding distributed across the Griffith community.

## Sexual Harm policy implementation

The new Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy and associated procedure will be implemented across the University in 2024. The policy and procedure are centred on the University's aim to provide trauma-aware and person-centric processes, services and support to students and staff who have experienced harm, coupled with a positive duty to prevent harm of a sexual nature.

An implementation plan is in development, including system updates and processes necessary to operate the new policy and procedure.

## Respect @ Uni week

Preventing gender-based violence starts with a culture of respect—now and always. Respect@Uni week was initiated in 2022 as a collaboration between Victorian-based universities. The purpose of the week is to promote the importance of respect, equality and inclusion across university campuses and online spaces. The universities facilitated a range of activities to engage their campus communities and collaborated on a series of showcase events, each hosted by one university but with access (online and/or in person) for students and staff across the state.

In 2023, the Victorian Tertiary Primary Prevention Network invited other universities across Australia to partner with them to deliver Respect@Uni Week 2024. Following much discussion across the sector and sector leadership, all universities have committed to hosting Respect@Uni in 2024, though with the flexibility to focus on themes and timing that will be most effective for individual campus cohorts.

Griffith University is progressing collaborations within the Queensland Tertiary Primary Prevention Network and other partner universities to provide a broad spectrum of knowledge and engagement opportunities for our staff and students as part of Respect@Uni-themed initiatives in Trimester 1, 2024.

## National Student Survey

Universities Australia has confirmed that another national survey of university students to assess the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment in university contexts will be conducted in 2024. As with the Australian Human Rights Commission Survey in 2016 and the National Student Safety Survey in 2021, Griffith will continue to support Universities Australia in planning, designing, communicating and implementing the survey. The survey results will further inform the effectiveness of university efforts in sexual harm prevention and response.

## Education and training

### **Refresh of *Recognise. Respond. Refer* training**

To ensure consistency with the proposed sexual harm policy and procedures, the Safe Campuses suite of training programs will also be reviewed and refreshed. The University's responding to disclosures training (*Recognise. Respond. Refer.*) will be updated in line with University policy and to ensure content is drawing from the most current evidence and compliance base, including Respect@Work and the latest Personal Safety Survey data (Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), Personal Safety, Australia). The updated workshops and eLearning modules will be released in early 2024, continuing to provide opportunities for students, staff and leaders to increase their knowledge and awareness of sexual harm and encourage reporting and support-seeking behaviours.

### **Mandatory training**

The visibility of educational programs that address consent and respectful relationships and raise awareness of reporting and support options is being considered as part of improvements to the student orientation framework from 2024. A mandatory training module is also under consideration for both students and staff. Increased visibility of programs and mandatory content will enable more Griffith students to grow their awareness, confidence and skills in the prevention of and response to sexual harm and violence.

### **Peer networks**

To strengthen connections across the University, Health Safety and Wellbeing is working with Student Life to develop an integrated peer support network in early 2024 for ongoing coaching, education and networking for staff working across the spectrum of prevention and response initiatives and services.

## Data management

As noted above, students and staff have several options for disclosing or reporting incidents of sexual harm, bullying, discrimination or harassment that span a number of work areas and multiple systems. Griffith is reviewing its data collection processes to provide more consistency and transparency to the University community in future reporting periods while maintaining individual privacy.

