

# Safe Campuses

December 2022

# Introduction

Griffith University's Safe Campuses initiative was launched in 2017 as a commitment to addressing the recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *"Change the Course: Report into Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault at Australian Universities"* (Change the Course). In 2022, the Safe Campuses initiative continues to coordinate centralised efforts in violence prevention and response and the promotion of a safe and respectful university community.

The final action from the Sector in response to the Change the Course report was participation in a follow up national survey. Coordinated on behalf of the sector by Universities Australia, the National Student Safety Survey was rolled out across 38 Universities in September 2021, with National and institutional results released in March 2022. Unlike Change the Course which demanded sector wide response to a common set of recommendations, results of the National Student Safety Survey are being interpreted and acted upon by universities individually. Further commentary on Griffith University's results and subsequent actions is provided in the body of this report.

## National Student Safety Survey

### Participation and results

The National Student Safety Survey ran in September 2021 under Universities Australia's Respect. Now. Always. initiative. The survey aimed to build on the sector's understanding of students' experience of sexual harassment and sexual assault in a university setting by measuring the extent of student experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault, the contexts in which they are occurring and the help seeking and reporting behaviours of our students.

The University acknowledges the 43,819 students nationwide who responded to the survey, including 998 from Griffith, and the 1,835 who bravely shared their personal stories through the associated 'Share Your Story' qualitative research. Nationally, the Survey results confirmed that continued focus is required by universities in the provision of safe and respectful universities, where reporting and support seeking options are promoted and accessible. At Griffith, this information will be used to inform student safety and wellbeing services and initiatives, and our responses to student concerns, disclosures and reports.

Griffith's results varied in comparison to the sector and highlighted areas of focus for future work. In summary, our results indicated:

- o More positive results than the sector in support seeking behaviours (though still lower than expected)
- o More positive results than the sector in terms of prevalence of sexual harassment in spaces such as residential colleges, clubs and societies and online
- o More troubling results than the sector in reported incidents of sexual assault (+1%) and sexual harassment (+4%) in the previous 12 months
- o More troubling results than the sector in terms of prevalence of sexual harassment in spaces such as our libraries, teaching and learning spaces and general areas including carparks, walkways, bathrooms and student lounges.

A snapshot of the University's Survey results is below:

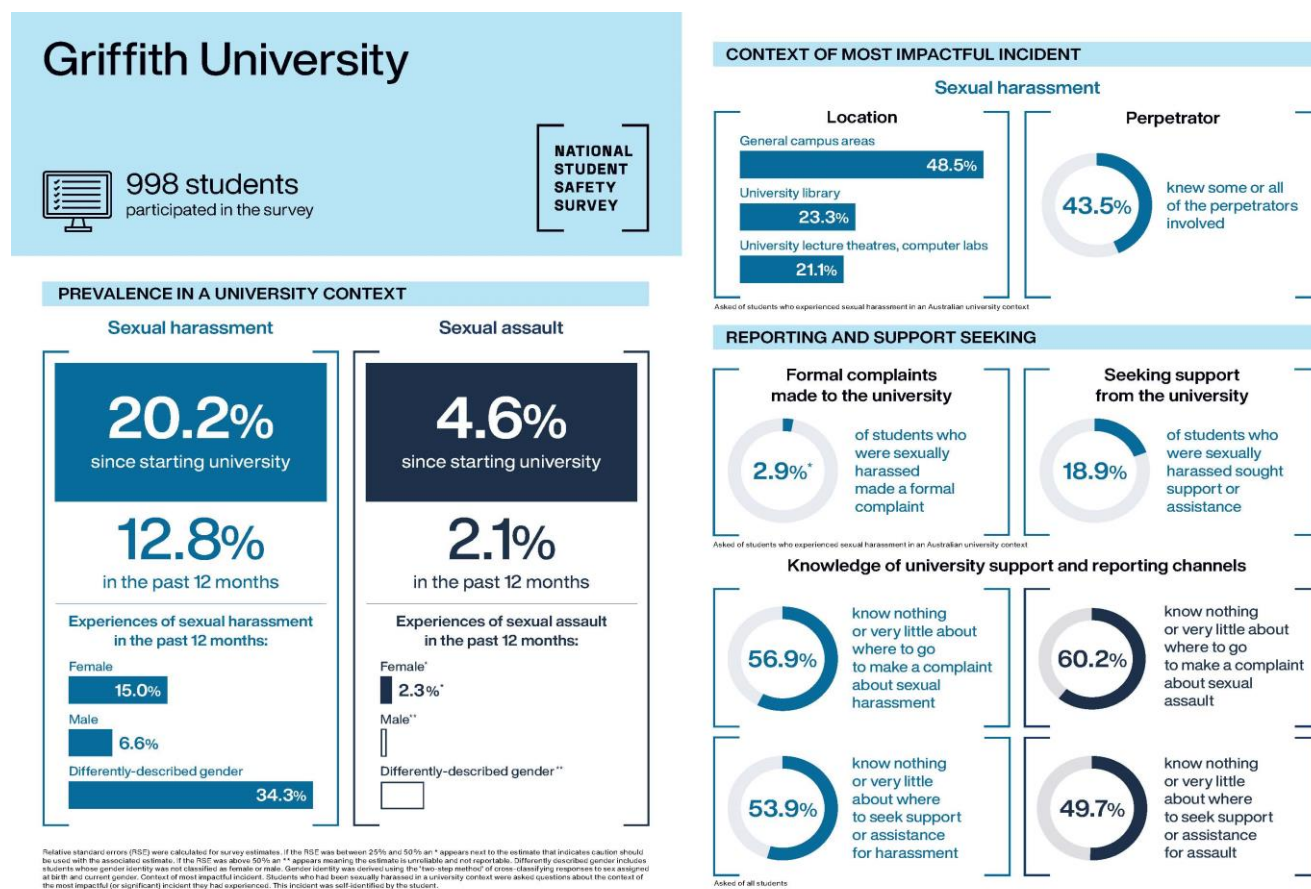


Figure 1: Griffith snapshot

## Actions

While there is no need for the development of a national response plan (as was the case following the Change the Course report in 2017), Griffith is progressing with an action plan to address concerns and opportunities raised by the NSSS results which is complementary to existing activities under our Safe Campuses initiative. This action plan is being led by Student Life and based on the following areas of focus:

- **Enhancing a sense of safety at university**

The National Student Safety Survey results provided insights into the physical spaces on campus where disrespectful behaviours occur and highlighted our most vulnerable cohorts. This area of focus requires collaboration across areas to understand, assess and enhance both physical safety and cultural safety and inclusion.

In June 2022 a Safety and Security Study was conducted by Campus Life to develop a greater understanding of students' safety experiences on campus. The results indicated that our students feel safest in highly activated areas on campus, lighting is a key factor in determining spaces which feel safe/unsafe, there is lower than expected awareness of support services, and a greater visible presence of the Campus Support Team would be beneficial. Campus Life is progressing a range of follow up actions in response.

In November 2022 a follow-on study will be conducted by Student Life with a greater focus on understanding perceptions of what makes a Safe and Respectful University Community. The results of this study, which will incorporate student and staff voices, will further inform specific areas of focus under the Safe Campuses initiative in 2023.

Student Life will continue to work with stakeholders across the University including Campus Life and our Libraries to identify gaps and implement improvements in actual and perceived safety, including increasing awareness of behavioural expectations and support options together with promoting effective responses to problem behaviours and disclosures of harm.

- **Understanding the barriers to reporting and support seeking**

The National Student Safety Survey Results indicated lower than expected levels of awareness of reporting and support options, indicating that further efforts are required in the promotion of these services and options across the University. Further, of those students who had experienced sexual harm at university, approximately half indicated that they 'did not think it was serious enough' to take follow up action at the University.

Barriers to reporting and support seeking, together with thresholds for response within our university community will be further explored in the Safe and Respectful University Community study, being conducted by Student Life in November 2022. The results will provide valuable insights into awareness across a range of support services and resources that are available at the University, gauge responses to different behaviour types, and assist us to learn more about the methods that students and staff are most likely to engage with to increase their knowledge. These insights will help to inform the areas of focus and delivery modes for training programs and awareness campaigns in 2023, including MATE Bystander, Recognise. Respond. Refer. (responding to disclosures) and other primary prevention and cultural change initiatives.

- **Strengthening responses**

In June 2022, the Provost sponsored refresher training for the current cohort of SASH Responders. Sessions were conducted across Nathan and Gold Coast campuses and online and were facilitated by Code Black Threat Management, specialists in problem behaviours. An audit of the SASH Responder Network was completed by Student Life in mid-22, highlighting gaps in representation across the university and a subsequent Expression of Interest for additional staff to undergo training and join the SASH Responder Network was open across October–November 2022. Additional staff will be trained and welcomed to the SASH Responder Network across T3, ensuring greater access to effective responses from T1, 2023.

In November 2022, a Student Safety and Wellbeing unit was established within Student Health, Counselling and Wellbeing. The unit will enable a central triage point for concerns from anyone at the University about inappropriate, concerning or threatening student behaviour and will provide information, advice and support – particularly in complex and sensitive situations. Student Safety and Wellbeing will play a key role in triaging and managing behaviours of concern through the appropriate University processes and supporting students through those processes.

A multi-disciplinary team of staff with expertise from across the University, the Behavioural Risk Team, has been convened by the Provost in 2022 to address high-risk behavioural concerns using a risk-based framework to inform current and future actions to support and mitigate high risk cases. The Student Safety and Wellbeing unit in Student Health, Counselling and Wellbeing will add further value to this process.

Individuals' responses to incidents and disclosures of sexual harm and disrespectful behaviour will be explored in the Safe and Respectful University Community study, being conducted by Student Life in November 2022. Study responses will provide insight into staff and student awareness of a range support services and resources, community thresholds across a range of harmful and disrespectful behaviours and the response pathways currently being used. These insights will further inform areas of focus across training and awareness campaigns in 2023 with the aim of reducing and removing barriers at Griffith.

- **Fostering safe and respectful communities**

The National Student Safety Survey results indicated that work must continue across the sector to further enhance the safety and wellbeing of our students. At Griffith, this can be achieved through collaboration across work areas and incorporation of the Griffith community voice in the design, development, and implementation of initiatives.

Student Life continues to engage with internal experts including the specialist Personal Violence Counsellors and the MATE Bystander team in the development and delivery of training and education programs for the university community. The consideration of mandatory training for students and staff continues, acknowledging that programs should be supportive of Griffith's core values, adding value to the student and employee experience and enhancing a sense of belonging through genuine consideration of diversity and inclusion through intersectional approaches. While the principles of responding with empathy, bystander intervention and referral to effective support will continue to be delivered in manners specific to sexual harm and gendered violence through Safe Campuses activities, there may also be opportunities to embed these principles within broader training programs, which in turn will be better suited to being considered mandatory across the University community.

Student Life also continues to work with Marketing and Communications to develop and implement ongoing awareness campaigns. To further inform this work, the Safe and Respectful University Community study is seeking to understand what a safe and respectful university community means to our students and staff, identify current awareness of specific resources and supports, and understand the mediums and messaging that the Griffith community would best engage with.

## **Sector engagement**

Griffith University, through Student Life continues to engage with colleagues across the sector to advance work in safe and respectful campus communities. In 2021 and 2022, Griffith was represented on the Organising Committee for the Australasian Universities Safer Communities Symposium. The Symposium provides a key space for universities to share and observe emerging and leading practice across the sector and in 2022 saw over 130 colleagues from across the sector engage with the theme "Promising Practice: Prevention and Response". Griffith will continue its involvement with this important sector initiative into 2023.

The University is also represented through Student Life, on a Universities Australia convened working party to progress the development of an evidence-based primary prevention best practice resource for the university sector. This newly convened working group will meet for a limited time, with the best practice guide to be delivered to the sector in mid-2023.

# Reporting, disclosure and support data

## Reporting and disclosure

Incidents and concerns are reported via students, staff and services across the University. It should be noted that Griffith University supports victim-survivors to manage their response to an incident or behaviour on their own terms and acknowledges that despite efforts to encourage reporting and support seeking, not all victim-survivors wish for their report or disclosure to be captured by the University.

## Report a Concern

A total of 124 related submissions were received via Report a Concern, which represents an increase (+33%) compared with the previous reporting period (93). A majority of reports (69% or n=86) concern bullying, harassment and discrimination (n=86) which is an increase on previous years. For this reporting period, 4 reports related to sexual assault and 34 related to sexual harassment. Incidents were reported as occurring online, on and off-campus.

Period 01.09.17– 31.08.18	Period 01.09.18 – 31.08.19	Period 01.09.19 – 31.08.20	Period 01.09.20 – 31.08.21	Period 01.09.21 – 31.08.22	Notes
9 SASH disclosures (4 x SA, 5 x SH)	28 SASH disclosures (4 x SA, 24 x SH)	15 SASH disclosures (3 x SA, 12 x SH)	19 SASH disclosures (6 x SA, 13 x SH)	38 SASH disclosures (4 x SA , 34 x SH)	An increase in reports and disclosures of SASH can be observed across the reporting period compared to previous years, with a notable spike in 2022. This increase is likely to have been influenced by participation in and communications about the National Student Safety Survey and its results, and increased promotion of reporting and support avenues across the duration of NSSS activities.

## Campus Support (Security) reports

During the reporting period, a total of 685 incidents were reported to the Campus Support team. Incidents range from behavioural concerns to damage, first aid, security or fire alarm activation, theft and vehicle incidents. During the reporting period no incidents related to sexual assault though 3 related to verbal assault, 4 to physical assault/stalking and 56 to aberrant behaviour.

Period 01.09.17– 31.08.18	Period 01.09.18 – 31.08.19	Period 01.09.19 – 31.08.20	Period 01.09.20 – 31.08.21	Period 01.09.21 – 31.08.22	Notes
1 sexual assault	1 sexual assault	0 sexual assault	1 sexual assault	0 sexual assault	Total reports to Campus Support were lower than the previous year (–73) across the reporting period, though incidents of aberrant behaviour remained steady (56) compared with the previous year.

## Support – University Counselling

Student Health, Counselling and Wellbeing provides support to students through Counselling and Wellbeing, Health and Medical and Chaplaincy services, or a combination of these. The University also provides priority access to specialist support through the Counsellors, Violence Response and Prevention. In 2022, an additional resource was added to this specialist service, enabling more equitable support for students affected by sexual and personal violence across all of Griffith's campuses. Student Health, Counselling and Wellbeing data for the reporting period indicates:

Measure	Period 1.9.17– 31.8.18	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
# Unique clients referencing personal violence	212	194	226	235	195
# incidents of personal violence referenced	272	249	190	184	233
# clients reporting more than one type of violence	46	90	8	10	9
% disclosures from female students	92.5	89.6	84	81.3	85
% disclosures made by International students	17.3	15.4	29	22.6	21
% incidents reported to police	29.1	20.8	27	26.4	23
% violence type = sexual assault, rape or domestic violence	73.9	80.3	90	60	38
% violence type = childhood sexual abuse	17.6	12.1	8	9.4	10
% violence type = sexual harassment	8.5	7.6	6	8.9	9
% timing of incident = within past month	29.2	46.1	42	18.3	18
% timing of incident = one to twelve months	25.2	20.3	37	7.7	8
% timing of incident = over one year ago	45.6	33.6	38	33.2	36
% timing of incident = not disclosed	24	18.9	8	-	6

## Support – Mental Wellbeing Support Line

The Griffith Mental Wellbeing Support Line offers a 24/7 immediate and crisis support service for students, with referral back to the University or other support services as requested by the student. During the reporting period, Griffith students sought support on 743 occasions, rising from 676 in the previous year. Reporting data for the period 1.9.21 to 31.8.22 indicates that 209 contacts related to issues including family and relationship, abuse and trauma, sexual assault and other violence, this is consistent with the previous reporting period.