

# Report to Wesley College on Cultural Renewal

November 2017

# Contents

© Elizabeth Broderick and Co 2017

This work is protected by copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), no part may be used or reproduced by any process.

## Design and layout:

Dancingirl Designs

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Project purpose	3
1.2 Project approach	4
1.2.1 General	4
1.2.2 Specific to Wesley College	4
1.3 Background and context	5
1.3.1 Life at Wesley College	5
1.3.2 Previous changes and particular strengths	5
1.3.3 Areas for strengthening	6
<b>2. Principles and Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Principle 1: Successful and sustainable cultural renewal depends on strong and courageous leadership</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Best practice student leadership	8
2.2 Gender diversity in student leadership	8
2.3 Resident Advisers	8
2.4 Student hierarchy	9
<b>Principle 2: Inclusive institutions foster and celebrate diversity, respect and non-discrimination</b>	<b>9</b>
2.5 Belonging	9
2.5.1 Diversity and fitting in	10
2.5.2 'Hooking up', having sex and fitting in	10
2.5.3 Alcohol and fitting in	10
2.6 Relationship with the broader University of Sydney community	11
<b>Principle 3: A lively, exciting and dynamic culture that also ensures the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students is critical to a thriving and progressive College</b>	<b>11</b>
2.7 O Week	11
2.8 The place of alcohol at Wesley College	12
<b>Principle 4: Unacceptable and disrespectful attitudes and behaviours negatively impact on individuals, Colleges and the College community</b>	<b>13</b>
2.9 Psychological and physical safety	13
2.10 Bullying and 'hazing'	14
2.10.1 Best practice responses to hazing and orientation	15
2.11 Sexual misconduct	16
2.11.1 Sexual harassment and sexual assault	17
2.11.2 Wesley College's policy response to sexual misconduct	18
2.11.3 Best practice for combatting sexual misconduct	19
2.12 Disclosure and reporting	19
<b>3. Conclusion</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4. Recommendations</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix A: Survey methodology and interpreting results</b>	<b>28</b>



GPO Box 396, Sydney NSW 2001  
admin@elizabethbroderick.com.au

www.elizabethbroderick.com.au

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project purpose

This report forms part of The Cultural Renewal Project (the 'Project') conducted by Elizabeth Broderick & Co. to examine the values, systems, behaviours and processes in five residential colleges ('Colleges') at the University of Sydney (the 'University'), including Wesley College. Put simply, the purpose of the Project was to understand elements of the existing culture of each College. To do this, the Project Team sought to understand the great strengths of College life – the sense of community; how academic excellence inspires students; pastoral care; extracurricular activities; the building of deep and lasting friendships; and networking opportunities and connection to College alumni.

The Project Team also sought to identify those areas of the culture in need of strengthening or renewal. For example, how easy it is to fit in? What are the traditions and are they still relevant? What part does alcohol play? Does an individual have to be a particular type of person to succeed? How are College students treated by the broader University community? What are the experiences of students in engaging and socialising with residents at other Colleges? How safe is the College? Are there instances of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

In those areas identified as requiring further action, recommendations for strengthening have been made.

This Project has been undertaken at the request of five Colleges, including Wesley College and its Council, and the University of Sydney. The Project Team acknowledges the support of Wesley College staff and student leaders, who have been critical to the success of the Project. This leadership group has ensured strong levels of engagement in the cultural renewal process.

In this report, the Project Team sets out its understanding of the prevailing cultural life of Wesley College including recognising recent strong and commendable changes. The recommendations made by the Project Team build on these recent changes, introducing a systematic approach to cultural renewal that benefits not only current students but those who will reside at Wesley College in the future.

The Project has been conducted at an important time for Australian tertiary institutions, as universities and colleges across the country are focusing efforts on ensuring the safety, respect and well-being of students. Both the College and the University recognise the importance of institutional cultural reform ensuring that students can thrive in a rapidly changing world.

This Project represents one of the first in Australia to examine and respond to these issues specifically in the context of university residential colleges. To that end, Wesley College, the four other independent Colleges and the University of Sydney are leaders in this important area and it is hoped that this report and associated recommendations will serve as a blueprint for other colleges, in Australia and abroad, to strengthen and evolve their culture.

## 1.2 Project approach

### 1.2.1 General

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are underpinned by evidence obtained from both qualitative and quantitative data. Data from an online survey ('the Survey'), discussion groups and one-on-one interviews with students and staff, a review of academic literature, and a review of Wesley College's own policies and statistics, as well as advice from staff and student leaders, all contributed to building a substantial evidence base for this Project.

All participation in the Project was voluntary and the diversity of opportunities to contribute to the Project allowed students a choice as to how they engaged. It also ensured students could be involved in the Project on a confidential basis. The Survey instrument was developed in collaboration with the College Heads and the Social Research Centre, a leading research institution affiliated with the Australian National University. The Social Research Centre also performed all analysis of the Survey data. Approval to administer the Survey was sought and granted by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee. See Appendix A for further details on the methodology of the Survey.<sup>1</sup> Students who participated in the Survey and in discussion forums were provided with contact details for relevant referral and support services.

This report, along with the individual reports delivered to each of the other four participating Colleges, is complemented by the report 'Cultural Renewal at University of Sydney Residential Colleges' that provides further detail on the evidence base for the Project's findings and best practice approaches to addressing the issues identified in this report.

### 1.2.2 Specific to Wesley College

In summary:

- 10 discussion groups were held with Wesley College students, with 125 students participating over 2016 and 2017 across First, Second and Third years. Separate groups were held for student leaders and Resident Advisers (RAs). The Project Team also held several one-on-one interviews with students.
- A total of 177 Wesley College students participated in the Survey, with the Survey attracting a 68% response rate (on par with the 69% response rate across the five residential Colleges).

The Survey results from Wesley College are compared to the combined results across the five residential Colleges participating in the Project. Statistically significant differences between the reported experiences of students surveyed at Wesley College and the experience of students across the five residential Colleges are highlighted in this report.

Of note: The Project Team conducted a broad review of culture and as such did not investigate or make findings about any incidents or allegations raised by individual students.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the Survey is not comparable with results reported in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report, where different questions and sample groups were used.

## 1.3 Background and context

### 1.3.1 Life at Wesley College

Wesley College is an impressive and dynamic College with a strong and proud tradition. It boasts a diverse and vibrant community. The strength and diversity of this community, as well as the richness of College life, emerged as a consistent theme throughout the Project's examination.

**Gender:** Wesley College is a co-educational College. In 2017, 54% of the students are women.

**Geographic and other forms of diversity:** Of Wesley College students, 26% are from the Sydney metropolitan area, 47% are from rural and regional areas, 15% are from interstate and 12% are from overseas. In terms of diversity across other areas, 7% of Survey respondents identified with a sexuality other than straight/heterosexual (including bisexual, lesbian/gay, asexual and questioning/undecided/unsure) and 10% identified as living with a disability. According to Wesley College data, five students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

**Leadership:** Wesley College is headed by a Master who is supported by a professional team with a range of expertise. The House Committee, of which there are 17 members including the Senior Student, is the organising arm of the Students' Club. All students are members of this Club and leaders are elected at the Club's Annual General Meeting. The Student Club is an incorporated institution with its own constitution, reflecting its significant autonomy and power as well as its strong responsibility to properly discharge its duties.

**Support for students:** Wesley College students are provided with a strong array of support mechanisms. These support mechanisms include 11 Resident Advisers (RAs), who are senior students with leadership capability who are appointed and trained to ensure that students are supported during their time at College. Similar models of peer support have been shown to be effective because, as students themselves, RAs can understand many of the issues which students are experiencing. This support network also includes a staff team led by the Master and supported by the Director of Students, Director of Programs, Academic Dean, Registrar and Chaplain.

**Activities:** A wide range of extracurricular activities are available at Wesley College, including a diversity of sporting, debating and performing arts competitions.

**O Week:** Orientation week, or 'O Week', at Wesley College involves a number of team-building activities, as well as activities which orient students to the policies, values and systems of the College. This includes presentations on issues relating to mental health, first aid, alcohol use, and sexual harassment and sexual assault.

### 1.3.2 Previous changes and particular strengths

Wesley College, led by the Master in consultation with other staff and student leaders, has instituted a number of changes to life at the College prior to commencing this current Project. The Project Team commends the College on this progress and notes that a number of the Project Team's recommendations build on these recent College cultural change initiatives. These changes include:

- Greater accountability of students who engage in unacceptable behaviour.
- Stricter rules concerning activities in O Week.
- Dismantling some of the more negative aspects of the student hierarchy.
- Bringing forward student elections to early second semester to ensure a smoother transition of leadership, including increased guidance for incoming leaders on their responsibilities.

In making such changes, Wesley College has built on its considerable strengths, including the diversity of its student body, the deep sense of belonging felt by the majority of students, and the breadth of extracurricular activities offered to students.

In addition, the Project Team notes that importantly, all student leaders at Wesley College, including RAs, are provided with a range of training including first aid, mental health and bystander training. It also notes that referral pathways are provided for students with mental health issues and that Wesley College has strong policies on unacceptable behaviours such as bullying and excessive alcohol consumption.

### *1.3.3 Areas for strengthening*

Supported by the qualitative and quantitative evidence obtained during the Project and a substantial review of relevant literature, the Project Team identified areas of culture that require strengthening at Wesley College. These areas are not unique to Wesley College but left unaddressed will limit the College's ability to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. Areas identified include:

- Ensuring the election of student leaders is democratic as well as transparent and rigorous. The process should ensure that those students with the best leadership qualities or potential are selected, rather than those who may be the most popular.
- Eliminating all negative aspects of student hierarchy.
- Balancing student independence with the College's duty of care to students including minimising risk to students' health, well-being and safety, such as through the supply and management of alcohol.
- Maintaining a respectful and safe environment and, when unacceptable behaviours occur, ensuring at all times a safe reporting environment and a rigorous complaints handling and support system.
- Ensuring better integration of Wesley College students into the broader University of Sydney community.

In relation to this last point, almost one-half of all Wesley College students stated that they experienced marginalisation and hostility from the broader University of Sydney community.

## 2. Principles and Findings

A number of principles informed a set of overarching recommendations which the Project Team has made to all the Colleges participating in this Project. This approach has been taken because, while distinct strengths and challenges were evident in the life of each participating College, *all* Colleges will benefit from building on their strengths in a more systematic and sustainable way. A common set of recommendations acknowledges that a cohesive and collaborative intercollegiate community will have a united response to culture, one that benefits individual Colleges, the University and, in particular the students.

The following findings about Wesley College are grouped under and take their lead from these principles.

### **Principle 1: Successful and sustainable cultural renewal depends on strong and courageous leadership**

Within Wesley College, there are three tiers of leadership: the College Council, staff leadership and student leaders. It is vital that all three tiers of leadership visibly commit to the next phase of the cultural renewal journey, just as all tiers of leadership demonstrated their commitment to the commencement of this Project. There is a strong appetite at Wesley College for ongoing cultural renewal with leadership at all levels having responsibility for driving meaningful reform. As one student stated:

*I think the pride of Wesley is what has been lost due to media attention, and I seek to rebuild it while maintaining a safe, inclusive environment. I believe that everyone else at Wesley should have a similar goal, and I hope we can find a way to do this while recognising and reacting to the issues brought to light in recent years.*

A strong theme heard by the Project Team was that students felt supported by staff, peers and the student leadership team: 90% of Wesley College students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by my peers and staff' and 84% of Wesley College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by student leaders' (on par with students from across the five residential Colleges). While many aspects of the overall model for support and leadership work well, the Project Team believes that the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of students should lie with the Master, Council, and, in appropriate cases, other staff.

Further, there was concern that students with the best leadership qualities or potential were not consistently selected for the student leadership team:

*I think we are really lucky with the leaders we have here.*

*I think the leaders this year are great, but we have a system that means that, say next year, they may not be so great.*

## 2.1 Best practice student leadership

Best practice recognises that student leadership is integral, not supplementary, to the successful operation of educational institutions. Developed specifically for university student leadership, the ‘social change model’<sup>2</sup> sees all people as potential leaders and leadership as involving collaborative relationships which lead to collective action. This suggests that ‘a conscious focus on values should be at the core of any leadership development effort’.<sup>3</sup> Best practice affirms the importance of leadership development programs, as well as transparent and rigorous selection processes.<sup>4</sup>

This means that selection processes need to ensure that candidates share and emulate the values of the Wesley College community, including respect and inclusion. Formal role descriptions should be developed together with clear criteria for selection that candidates must address. Student leaders also benefit from ongoing support via mentoring, team-building exercises and feedback.

## 2.2 Gender diversity in student leadership

The Project Team was highly impressed by the 2017 student leadership team and noted in particular that, in 2016 and 2017, there was strong representation of both women and men in leadership positions at Wesley College. For 2018, the House Executive is comprised of three male students. Historically, this has not always been the case. To continue to strengthen the student leadership, the Project Team believes that at least one woman should hold one of the top leadership roles. This is critical to reflect the diversity of the students they lead.

A 40:40:20 model is one that a number of organisations adopt to ensure this balance. This means that 40% of the student leadership are male, 40% are female, and 20% are either gender. The Project Team therefore recommends a 40:40:20 model for the House Executive and House Committee as well as various strategies to ensure the role of the Senior Student rotates on an equitable basis between male and female students. It is important to recognise that such a model is not inconsistent with merit. As stated in a letter co-signed by the organisation, Chief Executive Women, and the coalition, Male Champions of Change:

*adhering to an un-interrogated idea of merit means there is no examination of biases, and it reinforces the idea that gender inequality is about supply side problems rather than demand. So organisations miss out on the best talent and are fishing in an ever smaller pool of candidates. A pool that fails to reflect the community our organisations serve. If we continue to define ‘merit’ as people ‘like us’ who have done what we did, we will get more of the same.’<sup>5</sup>*

## 2.3 Resident Advisers

Models for peer assistance exist in many college residential settings across the nation and internationally. These models have been the subject of considerable review and attention. Peer assistants have been described as the ‘eyes and ears’ of an institution. At Wesley College, peer assistants, known as Resident Advisers (RAs), simultaneously fulfil the roles of a student, role model, counselor, teacher and administrator.<sup>6</sup> Further, the occasionally serious issues to which RAs frequently respond, including mental health concerns, alcohol-related issues and sexual assault have been described by some observers as putting them into roles ‘more akin to that of a professional’s or first responder’s.’<sup>7</sup>

2 Astin, H & Astin, W 2000, *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*.

3 Astin, H & Astin, W 1996, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook*, Version III, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, p. 16.

4 See, e.g., Astin, H & Astin, W 2000, *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*; Hilliard, A 2010, ‘Student Leadership at the University’, *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)*, 7(2); Dugan, J & Komives, S 2007, *Developing Leadership Capacity in College Students: Findings from a National Study*, National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, College Park, MD; Astin, H & Astin, W 1996, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook* version III, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles; Cress, C, Astin, H, Zimmerman-Oster, K & Burkhardt, J 2001, ‘Developmental outcomes of College students’ involvement in leadership activities’, *Journal of College Student Development*, 42:1, pp. 15–27.

5 Male Champions of Change 2016, *In The Eye of The Beholder: Avoiding the Merit Trap*, Accessed 1 August 2017, <http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MCC-CEW-Merit-Paper-FINAL.pdf>.

6 Letarte, CM 2013, ‘Keepers of the Night: The Dangerously Important Role of Resident Assistants on College and University Campuses in Kentucky’, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Practice*, Volume 2, Issue 2, December, p. 5.

7 *ibid.*, p. 24.



Echoing concerns expressed in peer-reviewed literature, the Project Team was concerned by the level of responsibility borne by many RAs, including the impact of this responsibility on the RAs themselves, as well as their capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to sometimes complex issues. Wesley College staff provide guidance to RAs on identifying the issues that they should escalate immediately to staff leadership. The Project Team strongly supports this approach. It is suggested that RAs also be provided with appropriate support and care to debrief on issues that might distress them in the course of their role, so as to minimise any risk of vicarious trauma.

## 2.4 Student hierarchy

Student hierarchies (beyond formal leadership roles) are a common feature across many residential Colleges and generally involve seniority and power increasing as people progress through year levels. These hierarchies are understood as cultivating respect for those with experience but, on occasion, can include conventions which may seem unusual or outdated to outsiders – such as the expectation that first years sit separately from other year levels when in the College Dining Hall.

This convention was recently abolished at Wesley College and the Project Team notes the consistent feedback that this and other changes were welcomed by the student body. This strong symbolic gesture visibly demonstrates that all students at Wesley are equal. Indeed, only a small number of Wesley College students (4%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘student leaders have too much power over other students’ (significantly lower compared with 11% of students across the five residential Colleges). The Project Team believes that it is vital that such reform is not wound back.

## Principle 2: Inclusive institutions foster and celebrate diversity, respect and non-discrimination

An inclusive College is one where there is respect for all, where diversity is core to its operation and fairness and equality underpin decision-making. Inclusive practice values the unique contribution that every student makes and is defined as much by what an institution does not accept as what it does. According to students who spoke to the Project Team:

*Wesley is for all – you get to mix with a lot of different people who you would never really be introduced to in the more insular school community.*

*I’m from the country and...knew no one...but everyone was just so welcoming.*

## 2.5 Belonging

A strong and consistent theme was the sense of belonging and inclusion felt by many students at Wesley College. Of Wesley College students surveyed, 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I feel a sense of belonging’ and 93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I get involved in activities and social events organised through my College’ (on par with students across the five residential Colleges). Relevant literature confirms that belonging is vital to a positive student experience. However, it also confirms that residential College students feel pressure to ‘fit in’ to the prevailing environment.<sup>8</sup>

The Survey showed that 5% of Wesley College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I don’t fit in at Wesley College’ and 12% had experienced ‘being excluded or isolated’ (on par with the experience of students across the five residential Colleges). Significantly more Wesley College women reported experiencing ‘exclusion or isolation’ (18%) compared with men (5%) (also on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges).

---

<sup>8</sup> While academic literature on fitting in and belonging in residential colleges is limited, studies that address this issue in the context of university campuses more broadly, can be instructive. See, e.g., Hamrick, FA, Evans, NJ & Schuh, JH 2002, *Foundations of student affairs practice: How philosophy, theory, and research strengthen educational outcomes*. John Wiley & Sons; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017, *Supporting Students’ College Success: The Role of Assessment of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competencies*, The National Academies Press: Washington, DC; Tinto, V 1993, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, 2nd ed, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Pittman, L & Richmond, A 2008, ‘University Belonging, Friendship Quality, and Psychological Adjustment During the Transition to College’, *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 76:4, pp. 343–362; Cooper, R 2009, ‘Constructing Belonging in a Diverse Campus Community’, *Journal of College and Character*, Vol X, No.3, February.

The predominant theme among those who had experienced isolation or struggled to fit in was that this was linked to social hierarchies or the drinking culture:

*[I have experienced] exclusion...as a result of not wanting to 'go out' all the time.*

*There is a large drinking culture. I'm not a big drinker so this somewhat excludes me from events.*

### 2.5.1 Diversity and fitting in

In relation to fitting in and diversity more broadly, this appears to be a considerable strength of Wesley College. Students commented to the Project Team:

*I really like the idea that Wesley takes students from such diverse backgrounds.*

*You realise that there are so many incredible people out there and it's really nice having the chance to... hear their perspective on different things.*

However, a very small percentage of surveyed Wesley College students (2%) reported experiencing remarks or behaviour signifying 'intolerance of diversity' while a further 11% reported that they had witnessed these behaviours (on par with the experience of students across the five residential Colleges).<sup>9</sup>

### 2.5.2 'Hooking up', having sex and fitting in

A strong theme among female students at Wesley College was their sense of empowerment. However, this did not entirely mitigate the pressure a small number felt to 'hook up' or have sex with other students:

*[The] hook-up culture...can sometimes lead to people feeling uncomfortable.*

*There is a culture of rumour and gossip...about who 'got with' who...*

The Survey revealed that a small number of Wesley College students (4%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel like I have to have sex in order to fit in or be accepted' (there was no gender difference). This was significantly lower compared with 9% of surveyed students (11% women and 5% men) across the five participating Colleges.

### 2.5.3 Alcohol and fitting in

Access to alcohol and its excessive consumption is a common feature in residential College life. Though students rightly noted that alcohol as a social lubricant is a significant feature of broader Australian life, a wide body of literature confirms that excessive and potentially harmful consumption of alcohol is a much more substantial feature of student life, including among college students.<sup>10</sup>

9 Behaviours constituting 'intolerance of diversity' included 'pressure to hide or deny their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to fit in or be accepted'; 'homophobic slurs directed at them'; or 'racist slurs directed at them'. Of the 11% of Wesley College students that reported they had witnessed or observed these behaviours, less than half (5%) reported it was directed at another Wesley College student and over half (7%) directed at both a Wesley College student and a student of another University of Sydney residential College. In just under three-quarters of these cases, the person engaging in the behaviour was a fellow Wesley College student.

10 See, e.g., Kypri, K, Cronin, M & Wright, C 2005, 'Do university students drink more hazardously than their non-student peers?' *Addiction*, 100, pp. 713–714; Ham, L & Hope, D 2003, 'College students and problematic drinking: A review of the literature', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, pp. 719–759; Gill, J 2002, 'Reported levels of alcohol consumption and binge drinking within the UK under-graduate student population over the last 25 years', *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 37, pp. 109–120; McAlaney, J & McMahon, J 2007, 'Normative beliefs, misperceptions and heavy episodic drinking in a British student sample', *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 68, pp. 385–392; Schofield, T 2014, *Alcohol use and harm minimisation among Australian university students: Final report to University Colleges Australia*; Hughes, C 2012, 'All Beer and Skittles? A Qualitative Pilot Study of the Role of Alcohol in University College Life', *Australian Universities Review*, 54, p. 22–28; and Leontini, R 2016, *Alcohol use and harm minimisation among Australian university students*. Paper presented at the Second Collegiate Way International Conference, 13–17 Nov 2016, ANU, Canberra. Accessed 19 July 2017. <https://universitycollegeaustralia.edu.au/conferences/papers>.

Of Wesley College students surveyed, 58% agreed or strongly agreed that 'drinking helps me to socialise and make friends at Wesley' (significantly higher than the 49% of students across the five Colleges). While this did not necessarily lead to a sense of pressure to drink, a clear theme was that drinking was critical to finding one's 'place' at College:

*If you didn't drink, I feel like you'd always get questioned about it... It would be so annoying. People would always be like 'why aren't you going out?'*

*I would say that it would be really tough without drinking. I think that so many of our activities revolve around drinking. Like yeah, you make your friends in the dining hall, but if you never go out with them or anything you're not going to consolidate those friendships.*

## 2.6 Relationship with the broader University of Sydney community

A strong theme emerging throughout the Project was College students' sense of marginalisation and, on occasion, victimisation, by other students and staff from the wider University community. Of Wesley College students surveyed, 56% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel stigmatised by the University of Sydney students and staff because I go to Wesley College' (on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges).

Students explained that when there are media reports of bad behaviour in Colleges, even if the reports relate to other Colleges, they can be particularly targeted. Male students stated that they are unreasonably labelled as sexist, while female students are labelled as 'weak' or victims. The Project Team was particularly concerned to hear about a small number of incidents where College students were subjected to excluding behaviour or comments by University staff.

That said, there was a perception by some students that College residents may, on occasion, contribute to or compound this isolation by confining themselves to only College-based activities or engaging with the broader campus during O Week in a way that draws negative attention. To this end, it is suggested that a greater level of interaction with those on the broader University of Sydney campus be encouraged by College staff and student leaders.

## Principle 3: A lively, exciting and dynamic culture that also ensures the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students is critical to a thriving and progressive College

Colleges are places where students should feel 'at home' and be supported to undertake their university studies and engage with the dynamic intellectual, cultural and social life of the College. Attitudes and behaviours that reflect the values of the College should be modelled and practised at all times.

## 2.7 O Week

As noted above, a considerable strength of Wesley College is the wide range of extracurricular activities available to students which enables them to explore new opportunities and develop new friendships. This includes during O Week, with a strong theme being how enjoyable students found this period:

*Best week of my life.*

*I was very quiet and reserved during high school and the activities of during O Week helped me to grow and emerge from my shell.*

The experience of O Week prior to changes made in 2017 elicited a diversity of responses from students. Students who had participated in O week in prior years stated:

*Compared with when I was a fresher, things are so much better [now]. There is much less intimidation.*

The Project Team supports the College's efforts to ensure that O Week is safe and inclusive for all students. As some students told the Project Team:

*We were conscious of changing things this year to make O Week less intense and to make sure everyone had a good time.*

*I think Wesley created O Week to be a really inclusive environment. I want to commend the lack of hazing and this was replaced with fun games and activities.*

However, a theme of a 'big drinking culture' during O Week and an indirect pressure to participate in activities, generally as a way of fitting in, was still apparent:

*Although there is no explicit 'forcing' into any activities...there is unsaid pressure to involve yourself in every event and drinking. I think that for the majority of people this is okay. [They] can deal with the pressure, but for some people they may feel forced into drinking or doing things they don't want to.*

*You're really trying to impress everyone... like finding your own feet can be hard.*

The Project Team has made recommendations about reforms to O Week across the Colleges which include an emphasis on harm minimisation while at the same time retaining its celebratory nature. A number of the recommendations build on reforms already made at Wesley College. Best practice suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' model for student orientation. Rather, programs should be tailored to the students and the institution, and should consider the social and academic needs of the students; the mission and goals of the institution; and how best to integrate the students in light of these.<sup>11</sup> The recommendations of the Project Team reflect these priorities.

## 2.8 The place of alcohol at Wesley College

The Student Club regularly holds parties for its students at the College, where alcohol is served under a licence held by a Wesley College student. In addition, like other College students, Wesley College students can consume alcohol in their rooms.

A significantly lower proportion (9%) of Wesley College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'there is too much focus on drinking at Wesley' when compared with 15% of College students surveyed across the five Colleges. However, as noted above, a significantly higher proportion of Wesley College students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'drinking alcohol helps me to socialise and make friends'. Students told the Project Team:

*When I moved here, it was like, 'oh my God, everyone is always drunk'. As you get older, there is less of that... A lot of freshers are like 'it's first year – I'm going to have so much fun at College, and I'll pass uni anyway.'*

*It's more the idea that in order to have fun with your friends, you must drink. If you don't, people will question why you have even come out in the first place.*

A common theme was whether students feel pressure to drink at College. The Survey revealed that 13% of Wesley College students surveyed have experienced pressure to drink alcohol when they did not want to, and only 1% reported pressure to take drugs when they did not want to (on par with students across the five Colleges). Meanwhile, 30% of students also reported that they had witnessed or observed other students being pressured to drink (29%) or take drugs (2%) when they did not want to (on par with students across the five residential Colleges).<sup>12</sup>

11 HigherEdJobs n.d., 'New Student Programs: A Look Inside Orientation, Transition and Retention Programs', Interview with Dr. Cynthia L. Hernandez of Texas A&M University, Accessed 7 Nov 2017. <https://www.higheredjobs.com/HigherEdCareers/interviews.cfm?ID=402>.

12 Of the 30% of students who reported they had witnessed or observed students being pressured to drink alcohol or take drugs: 9% had witnessed or observed another Wesley College student being pressured to drink alcohol or take drugs when they didn't want to; 16% had witnessed or observed a Wesley College student and a student from another University of Sydney residential College being pressured to drink alcohol when they didn't want to; and 5% had witnessed a resident of another College being pressured to drink alcohol when they didn't want to. Note, as students could select more than one category, as well as 'don't know' or 'refused', the percentages may add up to more than the total.

Excessive alcohol consumption can put students at risk of harm to themselves (e.g. alcohol-related injury) or harm to others (e.g. sexual assault or other assault). A theme from student feedback was that excessive consumption of alcohol heightened the risk of sexual assault or harassment.

The Project Team commends recent changes to alcohol management at Wesley College parties including the use of canned pre-mixes and efforts to limit students leaving parties in order to consume more alcohol in their rooms. The Project Team urges further efforts to align Wesley College's approach to alcohol management with best practice responses to alcohol harm minimisation.

## Principle 4: Unacceptable and disrespectful attitudes and behaviours negatively impact on individuals, Colleges and the College community

All students in a residential College have the right to feel and be safe, included and respected. Sustaining a culture of respectful relationships means enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any unacceptable attitudes and behaviours.

Safety in the College environment, both psychological and physical, was a key theme in discussions with students and in the Survey. The transition from home into semi-independent living can often be daunting for students. A sense of safety is therefore critical to allow students to settle successfully into College and to remain there.

## 2.9 Psychological and physical safety

Principles from Wesley College's 'Vision Statement' indicate that Wesley College is committed to:

*Provide a safe environment which encourages and promotes the academic, social, sporting, cultural and spiritual growth of each individual.*<sup>13</sup>

A strong theme was that Wesley College students felt at ease, were comfortable speaking out and expressing their views, and felt physically safe at the College. However, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'I do not always feel safe at Wesley', 7% of surveyed students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges). When asked to explain why they did not always feel safe at Wesley College, students cited social alienation or other residents being unwelcoming, bullying or teasing and a lack of support. In addition, students told the Project Team:

*The gossip makes me feel unsafe.*

*Drunk, sloppy and aggressive behaviour from boys [makes me feel unsafe].*

The issue of mental health was raised by students in discussion groups. While assessing responses to student's mental health was not within the purview of the Project, the Project Team acknowledges the referral pathways and options provided to students who experience mental health issues or who may suffer psychological or emotional distress. The Project Team also acknowledges the provision of support options to RAs. Such options are important to ensure these student leaders do not feel overwhelmed by their roles and to minimise their risk of vicarious trauma.

---

<sup>13</sup> Wesley College n.d., 'Vision Statement', [http://www.wesleyCollege-usyd.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WesleyCollege\\_Vision-Mission.pdf](http://www.wesleyCollege-usyd.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WesleyCollege_Vision-Mission.pdf).

## 2.10 Bullying and 'hazing'

18% of Wesley College students surveyed reported experiencing 'bullying or intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students' or 'hazing' since commencing at Wesley College.<sup>14</sup> These figures are on par with the experience across the five Colleges surveyed. Further, 17% of Wesley College students surveyed reported experiencing 'exclusion or isolation' or 'malicious rumours directed at them' (on par with the results across the five Colleges).<sup>15</sup> A significantly higher proportion of women experienced this behaviour (26% women compared with 7% of men), also on par with results across the five residential Colleges.

The Project Team notes the importance of bystanders in responding to and preventing bullying, intimidation and hazing. Indeed, the Survey revealed that 47% of Wesley College students reported they have witnessed or observed 'exclusion or isolation' or 'malicious rumours' directed at another College student.<sup>16</sup> A further 47% of surveyed students reported that they have witnessed 'bullying and intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to them or other students' or 'hazing' since commencing at Wesley College (on par with findings across the five Colleges).<sup>17</sup>

So-called 'hazing', a term used by students themselves, can often be associated with traditions and rituals of an institution. Hazing can be defined as:

*...any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.*<sup>18</sup>

*...any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate.*<sup>19</sup>

Notably, willingness to participate or the giving of consent does not mean that an activity is not deemed to be hazing. Common characteristics of hazing include power differentials based on hierarchy and social dominance between first year students, 'freshers', and more senior students; intentional initiation rites usually based upon College-specific traditions and rituals; and the consent and/or willingness of students to participate.<sup>20</sup> In many instances, alcohol and other substance abuse is a common feature of hazing.<sup>21</sup>

The Project Team acknowledges that hazing can be subject to a number of different interpretations by students, some of whom consider it to be 'fun' and not dangerous or demeaning. There was no evidence of any student being seriously injured from activities that could be characterised as hazing. Students believe that hazing at Wesley College is not serious and that people do not have to participate in any activities which make them feel uncomfortable:

*Everyone...seemed to have felt comfortable about...so called 'hazing'. [It]...is still optional to people and no one is forced to do anything they don't want to.*

*My experience of hazing (if that's what I could call it) was merely just some jokes played on me by some of the older years, in an entirely jovial and humorous nature.*

14 Of these students, 13% reported experiencing 'hazing', 7% reported 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students', and 3% reported experiencing 'bullying or intimidation'. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

15 Of these students, 12% reported experiencing 'exclusion or isolation' and 9% reported experiencing 'malicious or hurtful rumours directed at you' (on par with the experience of students across the five residential Colleges).

16 Of these students, 22% of surveyed Wesley College students reported that they have witnessed or observed 'exclusion or isolation' of another Wesley College student(s) or 'malicious rumours' directed at another Wesley College student, while 19% reported they have witnessed or observed 'exclusion' or 'malicious rumours' directed at a Wesley College student and a student from another College. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

17 Of these students, 14% reported witnessing or observing this behaviour directed at a Wesley College student(s); 27% reported witnessing or observing this behaviour directed at a Wesley College student(s) and a resident of another residential College; and 16% reported witnessing or observing this behaviour of a resident in another College. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

18 Hazingprevention.org 'What hazing looks like'. Accessed 10 July 2017. <http://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like>.

19 Allan, E & Madden, M 2008. *Hazing in View: College Students at Risk – Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing*, College of Education and Human Development, University of Maine, p. 8.

20 Hazingprevention.org 'What hazing looks like'. Accessed 10 July 2017. <http://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like>.

21 Diamond, A, Callahan, S, Chain, K & Solomon, G 2016, 'Qualitative review of hazing in collegiate and school sports: Consequences from a lack of culture, knowledge and responsiveness', *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 50, pp. 149–153.

Other students stated:

*I had quite a lot of freshers in my corridor being like 'it's so weird, you guys are screaming your heads off at us, and then next minute, you're our best friends'. They were like 'I don't understand this... you guys are so intimidating to us', obviously because we've got that power dynamic...*

*I'm just shy, so if I get picked on I go blank and can't respond, I guess... My group was a lot worse than the O Week they had this year. There was a lot more hazing, a lot more picking on people.*

In discussion groups, participants reflected on the problematic nature of some of the activities and practices that had occurred in previous years, and noted that the media reports of 2016 provided a moment of reflection for students to reassess their culture and re-imagine 'normal'. Students stated:

*I've had the most wonderful experience here. But I also felt like [the media reports] did raise an issue that was important and needed to be brought up, and talked about. It maybe gave us an opportunity to reflect back on a lot of traditions.*

*I took the time to kind of reflect on [a certain tradition]. Just thinking about it [was] a really good thing. Because some of the things that happened would never happen...in the real world.*

Certainly, the Project Team acknowledges that the lines between positive activities on the one hand and those that may be considered hazing on the other can be blurred, particularly when injury or harm is not obvious; when extreme forms of hazing are not evident; and when consent by participants is given. This ambiguity can be compounded when organisations, including Colleges, do not provide a clear definition of what constitutes hazing. As a result, it can be difficult to separate or 'unpack' activities that might legitimately and positively challenge and connect students and those that present risk of harm or can be humiliating. Far from wishing to eliminate positive and affiliative activities, the Project Team believes that Colleges, and their students in particular, would benefit from identifying and then reforming those activities that pose risk.

In relation to bullying, the benchmark definition is that proposed by Olweus<sup>22</sup> who pioneered work in bullying among school students. He suggested a student is being bullied when the individual:

*...is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.  
...An additional criterion of bullying is an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship).<sup>23</sup>*

The Project Team notes that Wesley College has a strong policy on harassment and bullying, although it does not specifically address hazing. The policy also outlines the College's response to bullying and the consequences of breaching the policy. The Project Team particularly acknowledges the principles for handling bullying incidents, in particular the first principle: 'all complaints will be taken seriously and assessed on their facts'.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.10.1 Best practice responses to hazing and orientation**

Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom have established best practice standards on the management and prevention of hazing and other orientation rituals that can cause harm to students. Allan and Madden's 2008 *National Study of Student Hazing* is the most comprehensive survey to date of hazing at US tertiary institutions.<sup>25</sup>

22 Olweus, D 1995, 'Bullying or peer abuse at school: Facts and intervention'. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4 (6), pp. 196–200.

23 *ibid.*, p.196.

24 Wesley College 2015, *Bullying policy (students)*.

25 Allan, E & Madden, M 2008. *Hazing in View: College Students at Risk – Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing*, College of Education and Human Development, University of Maine, p. 36.

Examples of hazing practices provided in the study include:

- Drinking games, including to the point of getting sick or blackout.
- Chanting songs publicly and out of context.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Being shouted at and/or called names by senior students.
- Games designed to humiliate participants or outsiders to the group.<sup>26</sup>

Four key themes to combat hazing and promote student safety emerge from the evidence:<sup>27</sup>

- Clear policies which communicate zero tolerance for hazing or any other behaviour that compromises student safety.
- Comprehensive education about hazing and alternatives to it provided for all students.
- Support for victims, including through appropriate reporting options and discipline for perpetrators.
- Support by institutional leadership that models values; enforces and is accountable to its policies; and that works in concert with students.

Hazing prevention policies need to be implemented carefully and with student involvement to avoid backlash. Wesley College has already demonstrated its willingness to work with students by involving them substantively in cultural reform to date.

## 2.11 Sexual misconduct

Recently, there has been considerable media attention, both in Australia and overseas, on sexual misconduct in residential college settings. Incidents ranging from sexism and misogyny, right through to sexual harassment and sexual assault, have been reported and some incidents have resulted in College policy changes, including the implementation of stronger disciplinary and accountability measures.

The issue of sexual misconduct at Wesley College was explored in discussion groups and during one-on-one interviews. Students, both men and women, were keen to share their views on the issue.

The Survey revealed that 17% of women at Wesley College experienced sexist remarks directed at them (on par with women across the five residential Colleges). Male Wesley College students did not report any incidence of experiencing sexist remarks (although not a significant difference, this compares to 2% of males across the five Colleges).

---

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* Also, de Klerk, V 2013, 'Initiation, Hazing or Orientation? A case study at a South African University', *International Research in Education*, July, 1:1, p. 99; Indiana Dept of Education n.d. *Sexual Harassment and Hazing: Your Actions Make a Difference!*; LaFerney, MC, 2016. 'You Can Help Victims of Hazing Recover from Psychological and Physical Harm', *Current Psychiatry*, 15(3), p. 72; Sonoma State University n.d. *Helping Students in Distress*, p. 15; Senate Orientation Activities Review Board 2016, *Orientation Week Policy Manual*, Queens University; Campo, S, Poulos, G & Sipple, JW 2005, 'Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing Among College Students and Points of Intervention', *American Journal of Health Behaviour*, March 21.



### 2.11.1 Sexual harassment and sexual assault

The Survey results revealed that 17% of Wesley College students surveyed have experienced sexual harassment (on par with students across the five residential Colleges).<sup>28</sup> Of women surveyed at Wesley College, a significantly higher proportion (26%) have experienced sexual harassment compared with men (8%). A similar result was observed across the five residential Colleges.

Importantly, when a list of behaviours that constitute sexual harassment was presented, 17% of Wesley College students acknowledged they had experienced one of more of the behaviours. However, when students were directly asked if they had experienced sexual harassment, only 5% indicated that they had, indicating a gap in some students' knowledge of what constitutes sexual harassment.

Most incidents of sexual harassment occurred within the Wesley College residence or grounds, with a small number also occurring at a different University of Sydney College residence or grounds. In nearly all incidents, fellow students from Wesley College engaged in the behaviour. Further, nearly all the incidents of sexual harassment of Wesley College women involved males only. Of the cases of sexual harassment of male Wesley College students, most involved females, and the others involved males or males and females.

For Wesley College women, the most common forms of sexual harassment included 'inappropriate physical contact' (14%); 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing' (12%); 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended' (10%); 'intrusive questions about your private life/physical appearance that made you feel offended' (8%); and 'inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated' (4%).

For Wesley College men, the most common forms of sexual harassment experienced included 'inappropriate physical contact' (4%); 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing' (3%); 'intrusive questions about private life or physical appearance that made you feel uncomfortable' (3%); and 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body' (3%).

As noted above, the importance of bystander intervention in responding to and preventing unacceptable behaviour, including sexual harassment, was highlighted in the Survey. It revealed that 37% of Wesley College students surveyed had witnessed or observed sexual harassment since commencing at Wesley College (on par across the five residential Colleges).<sup>29</sup>

Most of the female students stated that they felt safe and respected by other students at College. For example, students told the Project Team:

*I feel safer at Wesley walking to the showers wearing nothing but a towel than I do walking down the street fully clothed.*

---

28 Sexual harassment was defined in the Survey as: 'Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which, in the circumstances, a reasonable person, aware of those circumstances, would anticipate the possibility that the person would feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.' Behaviours that are likely to constitute sexual harassment include: 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing'; 'inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated'; 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body'; 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended'; 'sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts that made you feel offended'; 'repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates'; 'intrusive questions about your private life or physical appearance that made you feel offended'; 'sexually explicit emails or SMS messages'; 'inappropriate physical contact'; 'repeated or inappropriate advances on email, social networking websites or internet chat rooms'; 'inappropriate commentary, images or film of you distributed on some form of social media without your consent'; 'requests or pressure for sex, or other sexual acts'; and 'any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature (please specify)'.

29 Of these students, 24% reported that the subject of the sexual harassment was another Wesley College resident; 16% reported that the subjects included both a Wesley College resident and a resident of another College; 9% reported it was the resident of another College. Note, as students could select more than one category, the percentages may add up to more than the total. The most common forms of sexual harassment witnessed or observed included 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing' (17%); 'inappropriate physical contact' (17%); 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended' (16%); 'requests or pressure for sex, or other sexual acts' (11%); 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body' (10%); 'intrusive questions about your private life/physical appearance that made you feel offended' (10%); and 'inappropriate commentary/images/film distributed on social media without consent' (9%).

However, issues around sexual harassment were raised by students in discussion groups, individual interviews and in Survey comments:

*I find it super weird, when College boys get drunk, they tend to pick up and hug girls, which I find super confronting.*

*[I feel uncomfortable by] unwelcome touching [and] judgemental remarks about sex.*

The Survey revealed that 5% of women surveyed and 1% of men surveyed reported that they have experienced actual or attempted sexual assault since starting at Wesley College (on par with the results across the five Colleges).<sup>30</sup> Of the six incidences of actual or attempted sexual assault reported in the survey, all but one occurred during the academic year. In all reported instances, only males engaged in the behaviour and all but one involved students from Wesley College or another residential College. A further 7% of surveyed students reported that they had witnessed or observed 'actual or attempted sexual assault' (on par with the results across the five residential Colleges). Significantly more Wesley College women reported that they had witnessed or observed this (11%) compared to Wesley College men (3%) (also on par with the five residential Colleges).

It is important to note that this data is not comparable with results reported in the Australian Human Rights Commission's (the Commission) *Change the Course* report, where different questions and sample groups were used. Nevertheless, the Commission commented in their report that:

- Alcohol was often identified as a factor that contributed to people's experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment.
- The Commission received a number of submissions that reported sexual assault while the person being assaulted was unconscious or severely impaired due to the influence of alcohol.
- A particularly large number of submissions identified alcohol as a factor contributing to sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurred in university residential accommodation.<sup>31</sup>

Students at Wesley College told the Project Team:

*A minority of boys still don't understand the concept of consent when alcohol is involved, as well the use of protection and consent.*

*When lots of alcohol is involved sexual assault can happen.*

### 2.11.2 Wesley College's policy response to sexual misconduct

Wesley College's harassment and discrimination policy and procedure document outlines the College's zero tolerance toward any form of harassment:

*It is the policy of Wesley that any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination is not tolerated and is a grave breach of the rules of Wesley. Such behaviours are also against the law.<sup>32</sup>*

30 Sexual assault was defined in the Survey as: 'Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced, coerced, tricked or intimidated into sexual acts against their will or without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. It also includes any attempts to force, coerce, trick or intimidate a person into sexual acts against their will or without their consent. Sexual assault can also occur if you are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs and therefore unable to consent.'

31 Australian Human Rights Commission 2017, *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, Australian Government, Sydney.

32 Wesley College 2015, *op cit*.

While the policy is very clear on the College's position on sexual harassment, it is less clear on sexual assault. Instead, it identifies sexual assault as a 'type of harassment' that is illegal under criminal law.<sup>33</sup> The Project Team considers it imperative that sexual misconduct policy statements clearly indicate zero tolerance toward sexual assault and that the behaviour is clearly defined. Many victims of sexual misconduct do not report it because they feel that they will not be taken seriously. The Project Team therefore suggests the first principle in the College's bullying policy, 'all complaints will be taken seriously and assessed on their facts', is incorporated into a sexual assault policy.

### 2.11.3 Best practice for combatting sexual misconduct

Best practice standards for preventing and managing sexual misconduct have been established by international and Australian studies.<sup>34</sup> Five key principles emerge:

1. Residential Colleges must adopt a whole-of-community **integrated and holistic framework for preventing and responding to misconduct**.
2. The institution must have a **stand-alone zero-tolerance policy** about sexual misconduct which is clear, well-communicated, and readily accessible. This should clearly articulate consequences for any breach.
3. **Survivors must be supported**, including through appropriate reporting options and trauma-informed professional support.
4. Appropriate **evidence-based education and training** must be provided for staff and for student leaders. Staff and student leaders should be trained in trauma-informed and survivor-centred responses. Prevention education programs should be grounded in an understanding of gender, other identities and related power dynamics, as well as ethical relationships.
5. Institutions must **implement procedures to ensure transparency and disclosure, and conduct self-assessments to track policy efficacy**.

## 2.12 Disclosure and reporting

Literature on disclosure and reporting practices of college students identifies that students are generally cautious about telling someone, particularly someone in authority, if they have experienced unacceptable behaviour, particularly when the behaviour is sexual misconduct.<sup>35</sup> These findings are consistent with the findings of the Survey of Wesley College students and with the insights gained during discussion groups and one-on-one interviews.

33 Wesley College 2015, *op cit*.

34 See, e.g., Culture of Respect 2017, *CORE Blueprint: A Strategic Roadmap for Addressing Campus Sexual Violence*; Leidig, M 1995, 'The continuum of violence against women: Psychological and physical consequences', *Journal of American College Health*, 40, pp. 149–155; MacDonald, P & Flood, M 2012, *Encourage. Support. Act!: Bystander Approaches to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, University of New South Wales; Australian Human Rights Centre 2017, *On Safe Ground: Strengthening Australian University Responses to Sexual Assault and Harassment*, p. 60; and Our Watch 2017, *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to change the story*. End Rape on Campus has also developed a comprehensive model for building what it calls a 'survivor-centric policy' in End Rape on Campus Australia 2017, *Connecting the Dots: Understanding Sexual Assault in University Communities*; see also Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2016, 'Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy and Procedures for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Harvard University', pp. 21–22; and Culture of Respect 2017, *CORE Blueprint: A Strategic Roadmap for Addressing Campus Sexual Violence*, pp. 31–44. For sample language and definitions of sexual misconduct, see White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault 2014, 'Sample Language and Definitions of Prohibited Conduct for a School's Sexual Misconduct Policy'; Center for Changing Our Campus Culture 2016, 'Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to a Comprehensive Model', p. 21. See also Jewkes, R, Sen, P & Garcia-Moreno, C 2002, 'Sexual Violence' in Krug, EG, Dahlberg, LL, Mercy, JA, Zwi, AB & Lozano, R (eds.), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva: World Health Organization; and DeGue S, Valle L, Holt MK, Massetti GM, Matjasko JL & Teten Tharp, A 2014, 'A systematic review of primary prevention strategies for sexual violence perpetration', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19:4, July–August, pp. 346–362.

35 Walsh, W, Banyard, V, Moynihan, M, Ward, S & Cohn, E 2010, 'Disclosure and service use on a College campus', *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 11, pp. 134–151; Zinzow, H & Thompson, M 2011, 'Barriers to reporting sexual victimization: Prevalence and correlates among undergraduate women', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 20, pp. 711–725.

Of the 30 students who reported experiencing sexual harassment, approximately two-thirds sought assistance for the most recent incident, mainly from another College resident (who is not a staff member), with a small number seeking assistance from an RA or friends or family outside of College. No students formally reported the incident, with barriers to reporting including the student thinking they could sort it out themselves; thinking they did not need help or it was not serious enough. Of the six students who reported actual or attempted sexual assault, all but one sought support or assistance, and three students made a formal report.

Of Wesley College students who reported witnessing or observing sexual harassment, 62% stated that they took action as a result (significantly more than the 49% of students across the five residential Colleges). Specific actions<sup>36</sup> taken among those that witnessed sexual harassment included: 45% talked to the target of the behaviour; 12% talked to the offender; 17% spoke to an RA; 7% spoke to a College staff member; and 3% reported the incident to the College.

A theme emerging from the discussions with students was their confidence in the reporting system at Wesley College. Many students spoke positively about the RA system, as well as the staff, including the Chaplain, Registrar and the Master, as points of contact to whom they can confidently disclose or report an incident:

*Wesley makes its support services very available at all times and ensures we all know about them. I would have no issue reporting something. The RAs are amazing.*

Other students commented that sometimes a perceived lack of support can impact on a student's confidence in reporting an issue:

*I think the emotional support is sometimes lacking.*

*I was too scared to report to staff because I felt it would just make my life more difficult and so I just put up with it for the rest of the year.*

For some, there were concerns that their confidentiality would not be protected, or that they would be ostracised by peers if they reported an incident, particularly if the perpetrator was a member of their friendship group:

*If I reported something, I'd be scared everyone would know about it.*

A certain lack of awareness of the College's reporting process also emerged as a theme, which could be a disincentive to reporting. Further, the Project Team has some concerns about the level of responsibility placed on RAs and their limited expertise in hearing disclosures of such serious matters as sexual assault. Staff may also lack professional experience when serious disclosures are made, so it is vital that all first responders are properly trained and have a number of appropriate referral pathways for individuals seeking assistance. The first disclosure by a victim of sexual harassment, sexual assault or hazing can be the most important and so it is critical that the first response is the right one. In any setting, including a College, an inadequate or even punitive response can often result in silencing and re-traumatising victims. It can also prevent others from coming forward if they do not feel that they will receive a sensitive response.

The majority of Wesley College students did not know of, or feel comfortable with, utilising the University complaints system or counselling service. Most felt that they would go to the College support network before considering reporting or seeking support from the University of Sydney's complaints and support system.

---

<sup>36</sup> As students may have selected more than one action taken, the percentages may add up to more than the total.

## 3. Conclusion

The Project Team gained a rich insight into the life and culture of Wesley College. It was fortunate to engage with many students whose frank and honest contributions added enormous depth and insight to the Project.

Without question, the Wesley College community has much of which it should be proud, including the commitment of its Master, staff and student leaders; the involvement of its student body in rich extracurricular activity; its academic achievements; and the breadth and diversity of College life. In particular, the Project Team noted the strong sense of loyalty and belonging felt by students. This is core to a positive College experience.

The Wesley College community also can be proud of the reforms it has made in recent years to ensure the College is as safe and inclusive as possible. The impact of these reforms is evident.

Like all long-established institutions, there remain some traditions and conventions that exist at Wesley College which, if left unaddressed, will undermine the positive work already undertaken. In some parts of the College community, outdated attitudes and behaviours may also persist which will prevent Wesley College from realising its full potential.

As a result, the Project Team has made a range of recommendations which it believes will ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive College environment for all students. The suggested reforms are designed to produce systemic change to ensure that the culture remains strong in the future.

While all areas for action identified in the recommendations are critical areas for reform, the Project Team particularly notes the key role of alcohol in the social life of students at Wesley College and the potential risks associated with high alcohol consumption.

The Project Team has no doubt that Wesley College will continue on a strong path of cultural renewal. In so doing, it will build upon its many strengths, positioning itself as an influential leader in the intercollege community and within the broader community of the University of Sydney. It will also be a role model for best practice solutions for other university residential colleges across the nation.

## 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations build upon the promising strategies currently underway at Wesley College and the other Colleges. They are designed to ensure that those strategies are sustainable in the long term.

These recommendations are intended to be common across all Colleges, recognising that a cohesive and collaborative intercollegiate community will have a united response to culture, one that benefits individual Colleges, the University and in particular, the students.

The Project Team recognises that a number of recommendations have already been progressed one way or another by individual Colleges. It commends Wesley College and the Colleges for taking proactive action in advance of the report. Where there has already been progress by a College in line with a particular recommendation, this progress is acknowledged in the individual College's report.

It is intended that Wesley College and the Colleges accept the recommendations as either building on their own progress or as providing new and practical levers for reform that will ensure all students have a rich, rewarding and safe experience.

### **Principle 1: Successful and sustainable cultural renewal depends on strong and courageous leadership**

Leaders set the tone of organisations.

The College leadership team plays a critical role in shaping standards and driving reform. The University of Sydney also plays a vital part in supporting the Colleges as they strengthen and renew their culture.

Within Colleges there are three tiers of leaders: the College Council, the staff leadership team and the student leaders. Each has important leadership functions – what they say and do has a profound impact on the culture of the College. Led by the Council, all three tiers of the College leadership must visibly commit to the cultural renewal journey. Council, staff and students should work collaboratively to ensure that the culture of their College is one where all students can thrive.

Student leaders can be extremely influential and in this regard are the Colleges' cultural ambassadors. Given this influence, it is imperative that student leaders are selected through a transparent and rigorous process and that they are supported by staff to develop their leadership skills and capacity. This process provides a role for the student body in electing student leaders while also ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place so that elected student leaders demonstrate leadership capability or potential.

Diverse leadership teams, including gender-diverse teams in co-educational Colleges, allow for increased access to the best talent. This results in a diversity of thinking and improved decision-making compared to teams with no or limited diversity. A plethora of research confirms this. For this reason, it is important over time for co-educational Colleges to work towards gender-balanced leadership teams.

Collective action is more powerful and sustainable than individual action. Collective action will also demonstrate to the College communities and the University of Sydney the strong commitment the Colleges have to evolving their culture and to addressing behaviours that are inconsistent with respectful and inclusive environments.

## Leadership of the reform process

1. The recommendations contained in this Report should be owned and championed by the College Council, Master, staff and the student leaders.
2. The College Council should champion cultural reform. Council should regularly review and discuss cultural renewal at Council meetings and ensure adequate resources are allocated to progress the reform process.
3. To demonstrate their visible commitment to cultural renewal, the Master and the incoming Senior Student, House Executive and Members of the House Committee should develop and deliver a clear and strong written statement (signed by all) that articulates the importance of cultural renewal and its benefit to individual students and the College more broadly. This statement, disseminated widely internally and externally, should also:
  - Include strong messages about the College's zero tolerance to hazing and sexual misconduct as well as policies on alcohol misuse, harassment and damage to property.
  - Be reiterated and restated each year with incoming student leadership groups.
  - Be incorporated into orientation for first years and into student leadership training.
4. Recognising that collective action can be more powerful and sustainable than individual action, it is recommended that the Colleges adopt a cross-College approach and continue to work collaboratively to align and amplify efforts to achieve cultural renewal. This would include a standing agenda item on cultural renewal at the Heads of College meeting, including sharing best practice initiatives and problem-solving challenges.
5. To assess progress in relation to cultural renewal, the Colleges should readminister the Survey used in this Project, together with any appropriate modifications, every three years. The results of that Survey should be used to inform additional strategies that may be required to further strengthen and sustain a positive culture.

## Student leadership

6. The principal role of student leaders should be to foster and champion a culture of inclusion, respect and safety. The Student Club Constitution, charters, policies and role descriptions should reflect this.
7. To ensure that the College promotes and supports strong, inclusive and responsible student leadership, students and staff should, in collaboration, amend the current process for electing student leaders by:
  - Ensuring formal role descriptions for student leadership positions include responsibility as ambassadors of the College values and their obligations to uphold and model these values at all times. The Student Club Constitution/Rules should ensure accountability and consequences for House Committee members that breach their role as ambassadors.
  - Developing clear criteria for selection that includes candidates' demonstrated commitment to inclusion, respect and safety.
  - Ensuring candidates for leadership roles have the express support of the Master in relation to their demonstrated ability to foster and champion a culture of inclusion, respect and safety.
  - Enhancing the transparency, anonymity and confidentiality of the voting process for students, by, for example, utilising an online process with an external provider.
  - Commencing the selection process in early Semester Two to allow proper planning, training, mentoring and leadership development for successful candidates.
  - Ensuring that in co-educational/co-residential Colleges, over time a gender balance of student leadership teams is achieved including by:
    - » Implementing a 40:40:20 rule for House Executive and House Committee which ensures that there is good gender balance at student leadership levels. The basis of this model is that 40% of leaders are men, 40% are women and 20% are either gender.

- » Ensuring that the role of Senior Student rotates on an equitable basis between male and female students. The Project Team recommends that the College considers a range of options to achieve this outcome, including (but not limited to): (a) rotating the role between male and female students each year; (b) over a five-year period applying the 40:40:20 rule; (c) structuring the candidate pool in such a way to ensure that neither male nor female can ever be in post for more than two years in succession; (d) electing male and female joint Senior Students; (e) electing male and female joint Senior Students, one of whom takes the Senior Student role and the other the Secretary role for the first six months, switching roles for the second half of the year.
- » Ensuring that there is compulsory training for all elected student leaders, including (but not limited to) ethical leadership and decision-making, respectful relationships, leading diverse and inclusive teams, and bystander interventions.

Consideration should also be given to ongoing mentoring for elected student leaders by a member of College staff.

8. To enhance inclusion and equality within the student community, any practice that reinforces negative elements of student hierarchy should be reviewed with a view to modification.

## Staff leadership

9. Council should continue to support the Master and all staff to implement the recommendations and champion cultural reform, including by ensuring staff resources are adequate and by providing staff with access to additional training or skills development as needed.
10. To better reflect the leadership role and status of staff, the collective term for those who lead and manage the College should be changed from 'Administration' to either 'Staff', 'Executive Leadership' or 'Management'.

## Principle 2: Inclusive institutions foster and celebrate diversity, respect and non-discrimination

An inclusive College and University is one where there is respect for all, where diversity is celebrated as a core feature of the institutions, and where fairness and equality underpin decision-making.

Culture is set by the behaviours and attitudes that an institution does not accept or tolerate.

Inclusive practice values the unique contribution that every student can bring to College and campus life and enables:

- The College to attract and retain a diverse student population that reflects the diversity of the University campuses.
- All students to participate fully in the life of the College and the University.

11. Colleges, in consultation with the University of Sydney, should develop targeted strategies to attract and retain a diverse population of students that reflects the University population and broader community.
12. Colleges should foster a culture of respect and fair play in all intercollege social and competitive interactions, by College Heads:
  - Ensuring the intercollege code of conduct for students, including players and spectators of College sport and cultural activities, is grounded in respect for the inherent dignity of all.



- Eliminating and prohibiting all demeaning or degrading chants, songs and heckling.
  - Enforcing appropriate penalties for any breach of the code, including suspending players from their team or spectators from watching events, who breach the code of conduct.
  - Engaging with their University partners including University of Sydney Union (USU) and Sydney Uni Sport and Fitness (SUSF) to ensure a culture of respect and fair play is embedded in all activities.
  - Exploring broader, non-competitive opportunities for positive interactions between the Colleges.
13. The University of Sydney and Colleges should work together to foster greater connection between Colleges and the broader campus community including by:
- Developing, in collaboration with the Colleges, and investing in a positive campaign that raises awareness among the University of Sydney campus community of the value of and strong contribution by the Colleges to campus life.
  - Creating shared learning communities, including the creation of learning spaces within the Colleges, where College students and non-College students can come together for academic tutorials or other forums.
14. The University of Sydney should make it clear in its code of conduct that disrespectful, demeaning or unethical behaviours from University staff and other students towards College students and staff are strictly prohibited.

### **Principle 3: A lively, exciting and dynamic culture that also ensures the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students is critical to a thriving and progressive College**

Colleges are places where students should feel ‘at home’ while being supported to engage in their university studies as well as the dynamic intellectual, cultural and social College community. Colleges should foster a lively and exciting culture that enhances students’ overall university experience. In building such a culture, the safety, dignity, health and well-being of students must be paramount and risks must be minimised. Attitudes and behaviours that reflect the values of the College should be modelled and practised at all times.

#### **Orientation**

15. ‘O Week’ should be renamed to signal a shift towards induction and welcome and away from the problematic connotations and expectations of the past.
16. Orientation should be closely overseen by College staff with assistance from RAs and select student leaders.
17. Each College should develop a policy that clearly articulates the purpose of orientation with a focus on induction and inclusion into the College and University community. The policy should be underpinned by respect and safety, inclusion and equity, and ethical leadership. Student leaders involved in the program should be required to sign a code of conduct that reflects the intent of the policy. The orientation policy should include or continue to include:
- The strict prohibition of practices that may be demeaning or place students at physical or emotional risk, including hazing.
  - The inclusion of alcohol-free days (number to be determined by individual Colleges) during the period of orientation.
  - Appropriate training in areas such as first aid, sexual misconduct, responsible consumption of alcohol, and the proper and ethical exercise of authority (student power).

- The requirement that appropriate events should be subject to a risk assessment. Other events in the academic year should also be subject to a risk assessment.
- The alignment, as far as practicable, with faculty-based activities and information sessions for new students.

## Alcohol

18. The Heads of College should develop a common approach to alcohol harm minimisation. This approach should consider best practice interventions to reduce access and supply to and the demand for alcohol, and to reduce harm caused by alcohol. The Heads of College may also seek advice from an expert in harm minimisation and drinking patterns of the College age cohort to assist in developing this approach. In particular, the Project Team recommends:
- The positions of licensees and bar management should be held by qualified individuals or organisations independent of the Student Club and contracted by College staff.
  - Commercial bar rates should be charged for all alcohol at College events and venues and as such the use of Student Club fees for the purchase of alcohol should be prohibited.
  - A zero-tolerance approach is visibly practised for alcohol-related behaviour that causes disturbance, damage or harm to any student or property.
  - The Student Club should be responsible for any non-accidental property damage, including alcohol-related property damage. This would include the cost of replacement or repair, where the alleged offender cannot be identified.

Once developed, the policy should be widely disseminated among the intercollege community with an explanation of its objectives.

## Principle 4: Unacceptable and disrespectful attitudes and behaviours negatively impact on individuals, Colleges and the College community

The vast majority of students feel respected by their peers and have a strong sense of safety at their College. Some students however experience behaviours that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. For some, particularly female students, experiences such as sexual harassment by other students and for a few, sexual assault, create significant distress and trauma.

All students in College have the right to feel and be safe and respected. Sustaining a culture of respectful relationships is key to a zero-tolerance approach to any unacceptable attitudes and behaviours.

19. Each College's policies on bullying and harassment should explicitly include provisions that prohibit hazing or any other behaviours that compromise students' physical or psychological safety and well-being. The provisions should include a clear definition and scope of hazing behaviours. In line with best practice approaches to the prohibition of hazing:
- The Colleges should provide comprehensive education about hazing.
  - Victims must be supported, including through appropriate reporting options.
  - Students who engage in hazing behaviours should be appropriately held to account.

20. Each College and the University of Sydney should develop, with guidance from an expert in sexual harassment, sexual assault and respectful relationships, a stand-alone policy that addresses sexual misconduct. The stand-alone policies of the Colleges and the University should be underpinned by best practice principles.
21. Each College's policy should articulate a zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct, a commitment to trauma informed victim/survivor support and, where possible, to holding perpetrators to account. Specifically, the policy should:
  - Expressly prohibit sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment and sexual assault) and make clear the consequences of breaching the policy.
  - Define key terms and concepts illustrated with relevant examples in order to clarify the meanings of and behaviours that constitute sexual harassment, sexual assault and consent.
  - Acknowledge the institution's responsibility to provide a safe and respectful environment for all.
  - Articulate expectations that all members of the College community (including the College Council, staff and students) have a role in creating a safe and respectful environment.
  - Provide clear details on processes for reporting and responding to sexual misconduct, including with specific names and contact details, and how to support someone who has experienced sexual assault.
  - Provide clear guidance and a variety of options for survivors/victims to disclose experiencing sexual misconduct; to seek support, counselling and health services; and to identify procedures and timeframes for investigations.
  - Ensure reports are dealt with sensitively and expeditiously and that the parties to a complaint are advised of progress and outcomes while ensuring confidentiality is maintained.
22. All relevant staff and Resident Assistants should undergo first responder training by an expert in trauma and survivor-centred approaches, to ensure they have the skills to respond sensitively and appropriately to a sexual assault or sexual harassment disclosure. Evidence-based prevention education and awareness about sexual assault and sexual harassment, and bystander interventions, should be provided to all students and relevant staff. All relevant staff and students should receive this education during their orientation and then refresher training each year they are at College.
23. In recognition of the psychological and emotional needs of some students, the College should provide and widely advertise referral pathways to specialist psychological support services for students, including for students who have experienced trauma. This support should also be offered to RAs to minimise the risk of vicarious trauma or distress that they may experience through their role.

# Appendix A: Survey methodology and interpreting results

An online survey (the Survey) was administered to all students (over the age of 18 years) across the five residential Colleges between 18 May and 9 June 2017.

A total of 177 Wesley College students participated in the Survey. Students were emailed an invitation to take part and received up to two reminders during the course of fieldwork. All Wesley College students over the age of 18 years were invited to take part (n=261). Student details were passed onto the Social Research Centre from Wesley College for the purpose of the research. Students who took part were provided with a \$10 e-voucher as an acknowledgement of the time taken to complete the Survey. The Survey took, on average, 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The Survey attracted a 68% response rate<sup>1</sup> (compared with 69% across the five residential Colleges).

The aim of the Survey was to gather quantitative data on perceptions and experiences of students on a range of areas related to College life, including strengths of College life, and areas they find challenging. It also aimed to understand the prevalence of inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment and bullying, and any patterns in the experience of particular groups of students, for example women and first year students.

The Survey provided an alternative avenue for Wesley College students to engage with the Project and confidentially report on their views and experiences. The findings are reflected throughout this report.

The Survey instrument was developed by the Project Team in collaboration with the College Heads and the Social Research Centre, a highly regarded social research organisation based in the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU. The Survey instrument built upon existing survey instruments including the *National Sexual Harassment survey*,<sup>2</sup> the *Respect Now Always survey*,<sup>3</sup> and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Personal Safety Survey*.<sup>4</sup> However, due to the different population bases and variations in survey methodology, the results cannot be compared to these other surveys.

The Survey responses were weighted to ensure they reflected and were representative of the make-up of the College student population including by gender, undergraduate or postgraduate status, and year at College.

Approval was sought and granted to administer the Survey by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number: 2017/234). The Survey data was analysed by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Project Team. A list of appropriate referrals and supports were provided to students who participated in the Survey.

- 
- 1 Response rate was defined as the number of interviews divided by the total number of students invited to take part.
  - 2 Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, *Working Without Fear: Results of the Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey*, Australian Government.
  - 3 Australian Human Rights Commission 2017, *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, Australian Government.
  - 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *4906.0 – Personal Safety, Australia, 2012*.

## Interpreting the results

The table below presents margins of error associated with various survey estimates. These take into account both the achieved response rate (68%) and the population of Wesley College students (n=261). This table should be used to assist with the interpretation of results. For example, if 50% of Wesley College students agree with a statement, we can be 95% confident that the true estimate is between 46% and 54%.

Survey estimate	Associated margin of error, at the 95% confidence level ( $p < .05$ )	
	Wesley College	All Colleges
50%	+/- 4.2%	+/- 1.7%
40%/60%	+/- 4.1%	+/- 1.7%
30%/70%	+/- 3.8%	+/- 1.6%
20%/80%	+/- 3.3%	+/- 1.4%
10%/90%	+/- 2.5%	+/- 1.1%
5%/95%	+/- 1.8%	+/- 0.8%

Significance testing was done at the 95% confidence level ( $p < .05$ ). Significant differences have been highlighted throughout the report.





