Wesley College

Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence

Executive Summary

Wesley College recognises our responsibility as a residential college affiliated with the University of Sydney and as a leader in residential communities in the higher education sector to help shape and nurture a community culture where respect and equality are core to our purpose and where every person who belongs to our community, whether that be a resident student, a staff member, a family member or an alumnus, understands their responsibility uphold these values and expectations in everything that they do.

The National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gendered Based Violence has brought into focus the important part residential college communities can play to ensure our society is free from harm and safe for everybody to enjoy their lives, and the unique opportunity colleges have to influence norms, behaviours and support-seeking. This assessment is framed by the national evidence base on the gendered drivers of violence and reflects the expectations set out in the National Code, including Standard 7 (Student Accommodation). It also draws on Wesley College's history of cultural reform and continuous improvement.

Wesley works collaboratively with the University of Sydney to support our students in their best endeavours in the studies, but also, importantly, to promote safe, respectful and inclusive community life and ensure residents can access appropriate support and reporting pathways. Wesley's approach is underpinned by visible staff presence within the community, a multi-layered pastoral care model (including residential staff, Community Leaders and an on-site counsellor), and multiple reporting and support mechanisms, including RespectX and University-based supports.

Wesley College is committed to the continuous improvement and re-shaping of its community through listening, learning and taking action where necessary to ensure our college is safe and inclusive for everyone. This Whole-of-Organisation Assessment identifies key enablers, systemic risks and barriers across core areas of operation, including leadership and culture, structures and norms, systems and infrastructure, service delivery, policies and procedures, governance, and community engagement. It outlines priority actions for strengthening prevention, response, accountability and resident confidence in support pathways.

This Whole of Organisation Assessment helps inform our Whole of Organisation Plan as part of our commitment to meet the overall requirements of the National Code and Standard 7 related to 'Student Accommodation', and to ensure Wesley College's ongoing alignment with sector best practice and the University of Sydney's broader prevention and response framework.

Introduction

Wesley College is a co-educational residential college affiliated with the University of Sydney (University) and located within the University's Camperdown campus in Sydney's inner-west. Founded by an Act of the New South Wales Parliament in 1910 and opened in 1917, Wesley College became the first of the University's residential colleges to admit women in 1969.

As an academic residential community, Wesley College supports approximately 260 undergraduate residents drawn from diverse rural, regional, metropolitan and international backgrounds, providing accommodation, pastoral care and co-curricular engagement opportunities within the University.

The college is led by the Master and supported by a professional team of live-in and day staff, including residential staff responsible for student wellbeing, alongside other contracted personnel overseeing academic support, operations and facilities.

Governance of Wesley College is the responsibility of the College Council, comprising appointed and elected members, student representatives and the Master, which provides strategic oversight, ensures compliance with regulatory and ethical obligations, and guides the college's direction.

This Whole-of-Organisation Assessment (the Assessment) is framed by an understanding of the gendered drivers of violence against women as articulated in Australia's national framework to prevent violence against women, 'Change the Story'. These gendered drivers underpin the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032, Australia's national policy framework to end gender-based violence in one generation. These gendered drivers are:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Rigid gender stereotypes
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Other forms of discrimination and inequality – such as racism, homophobia, transphobia – intersect with gender inequality to compound people's experiences of violence.

Evidence from Change the Course (2017) and the National Student Safety Survey (2021) shows that colleges are high-risk environments for gender-based violence to occur. Evidence also shows that the likelihood of violence increases when men that hold discriminatory attitudes towards women and other people misuse alcohol.

Wesley College is committed to reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence and providing a safe environment for everyone, including our residents, staff and visitors.

This Whole-of-Organisation Assessment was conducted to provide a comprehensive summary of Wesley College's current systems, practices, and culture in relation to the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence. The assessment included consultations with relevant College staff and leadership, as well as engagement with student representative groups, to understand perceptions of safety, and the effectiveness of existing supports. A review of internal data relating to disclosures, reports, and responses to incidents of sexual misconduct and gender-based violence was undertaken to assess consistency, timeliness, and alignment with policy and legislative obligations. The assessment also drew on analysis of relevant cultural reviews (Broderick Review – 2017, Shehadie Review – 2023) and sector-wide findings, alongside a review of current College policies, procedures, training, and preventative initiatives, to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

This Assessment provides a clear and evidence-informed overview of Wesley College's strengths, challenges and areas for improvement in relation to preventing gender-based violence and supporting victim-survivors. These are presented as enablers, risks and barriers in accordance with the language used in the National Code. This assessment identifies areas of operation relevant to Wesley College as they may align with areas defined in the National Code.

The Assessment will support Wesley College's strategic decision-making, guide future planning and ensure our alignment with national expectations and sector good practice.

Area of operation: Leadership, culture and environment

The College Council is the governing body and has 11 members, including the Master. Members are appointed or elected according to the by-laws that govern the operations of the Council. The membership is made up of 5 Uniting Church members, 4 Old Collegians, one appointed Skills-based Member and the Master. Two Student Representatives sit on the Council as ex-officio members, one being the Senior Student and one being an appointed student representative (of a different gender identity to the Senior Student). The Council is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the college, appointing and supporting the Master, ensuring appropriate governance and oversight, and monitoring risk, compliance and resident safety.

The Master leads the staff team and is responsible for implementing the strategy and oversight of the day-to-day operations. The Master is supported by an executive team, including the Director of Students, Director of Programs and Director of Finance and Property, who collectively oversee student wellbeing, residential life, academic and co-curricular programs, and operational matters.

There are three residential staff members who reside onsite with their families. This on-site presence supports visibility, accessibility, and timeliness of response to student wellbeing and safety matters.

The Pastoral Care Team are central to the college, and this team includes our Counsellor, Chaplain, Director of Students, Director of Programs and Master. This is supported by a Community Leader team (8 staff) who work closely with the Director of Students and provide the front-line support for our residents. The team of eight trained Community Leaders (senior students appointed to these positions by College staff) manage the after-hours contact and live within the student residential areas, enabling early identification of emerging issues and timely escalation to staff, where required.

The Students' Club also has an elected leadership structure within the college: the House Committee, led by the Student Executive. These students are self-nominated and elected by their peers, and oversee the student social and co-curricular activities, including sport, cultural activities, student-driven initiatives and charity work. The Senior Student leads an executive team who meet regularly with the Staff Executive team to work together to plan and implement activities as well as problem solve and ensure alignment of activities to college values.

Sources of information informing this assessment (Standard 7.2)

- Wesley College Council Agenda and Minutes
- Broderick Review 2017
- Deloitte Risk Assessment tool
- Alex Shehadie Cultural Review 2023
- Fortnightly Student Executive and Staff Executive meetings throughout Academic year
- Weekly Community Leader meetings with Director of Students which feeds into Fortnightly Staff Pastoral care meetings.

Leadership, culture and environment

Enablers

- Wesley College has a high level of staff presence within the student community, including within the physical College environment, and at all college events, on and off site, which supports visibility, approachability and early identification of emerging issues.
- Residential staff are present at formal dinners (Monday) and community dinners (Wednesday) every week. On these nights, all students and staff dine together and share conversations, hear from speakers or enjoy a cultural performance or a game of trivia together. Wesley has high levels of engagement between students and staff, which is grounded in the staff presence at lunch times, dining communally with students, reinforcing shared community norms and respectful interactions.
- There is a culture of developing a strong working relationship between student leaders and staff executive, supporting shared ownership of culture, safety and behaviour expectations.
- After hours, Community Leaders are rostered on who are highly respected. trusted and well known to all resident students. This high level of trust allows our CLs to be across any emerging issues in our community at the grass roots level, and to escalate concerns promptly to residential staff where required.
    - There are strengths in Wesley's long-standing leadership by the current Master who has led cultural change since 2010 and over this length of time has developed strong relationships and connections to bring about sustainable change, including in relation to student safety, behaviour and wellbeing.

One of the strengths of Wesley's physical environment is being all under one roof, so visibility is clear and there is a joined sense of belonging and being seen, which supports both community connection and informal supervision.

- Wesley has had an onsite counsellor since 2011 and more recently has increased this position to full time. This dedicated access to counselling for students has been transformative, with residents provided with confidential support relating to safety, wellbeing and mental health. A strong referral network has been established, offering appropriate escalation to external assistance when required.
- Students have a variety of people and mechanisms through which they can raise concerns, including staff, Community Leaders, and an online reporting platform (RespectX), for both anonymous and formal reports. Swift action is taken on any behavioural matters that come to light, with clear, timely and proportionate responses that model intolerance of unacceptable behaviours.
- Staff have a variety of approaches and tools available to ensure a measured and fair response to any matters reported, allowing for nuanced responses to reflect the nature and seriousness of concerns raised.
- Creating diversity in our community is reflected in a well-articulated Admissions Policy, which clearly outlines decision-making in the application process to reflect both the applicant pool and the college's priorities, supporting diversity of background, experience and perspective.

Systemic risks	• Alcohol consumption, and understanding its impact on others when consumed excessively, remains an important ongoing conversation with university students. In a residential college environment where students live and socialise in close proximity, alcohol can contribute to behaviours that negatively affect others if not actively managed and addressed, including increased risk of harm and behaviours that cross personal boundaries. • There has been a major cultural renewal project, the Broderick Review (2017), followed by a survey in 2022 and a qualitative review in 2023. While these reviews provide important insights, the cyclical nature of the student population means that cultural risk must be continually monitored using multiple data sources rather than relying on periodic reviews alone. • In a co-educational college, there are risks associated with ensuring balanced leadership representation in terms of gender and diversity when leadership selection involves elections. While this can be mitigated through a combination of elected and appointed roles, t is important to look at the high-level overview of student leadership and achieve balance at that level.
Barriers	• The turnover of residents (approximately 100 new members each year) means there is an ongoing need to refresh and reset expectations annually. This requirement extends to returning students, who may be eager to resume College life but may not consistently engage with updated policies or reflect deeply on cultural issues and their own responsibility in sustaining positive change. • For many residents who are not part of formal leadership structures or committees, there may be limited visibility of the role leaders play in promoting safe and respectful environments, or of the ways in which student leaders and staff work together on these matters. • Social barriers can exist to reporting concerns about friends or peers, particularly to staff. This may stem from uncertainty about how a matter will be handled, perceptions that responses may be punitive, or concern about the potential impact on another student. Hesitancy around reporting outcomes remains a genuine challenge. • Student leaders may at times be expected by the wider student community to carry the primary responsibility for resolving issues. As these roles are voluntary, it is important that expectations are appropriately balanced and that responsibility for culture and safety is understood as shared. • Culture requires continual monitoring and reinforcement throughout the year through discussion groups, surveys and regular engagement opportunities. It cannot be effectively addressed through front-loaded interventions alone or approached as a ‘set and forget’ process.

Key actions in response	Training • All staff to be trained in responding with compassion and responding to disclosures. • Ensure all returning students have completed the University of Sydney online training in gender-based violence (through the Respect@Sydney program), before they move into College each year. • Insert supplementary training on gender-based violence as a refresher for all students at the start of Semester 2. Other • Ensure students are familiar with policies and methods of reporting through a variety of communication channels and regular communication throughout the academic year.

Area of operation: Structures, norms and practices

The residential environment at Wesley College is shaped by a set of organisational structures, cultural norms and daily practices that influence behaviour and relationships with the community. These include the college's formal governance and leadership arrangements (outlined within Leadership, culture and environment), pastoral care and wellbeing systems, student leadership structures (including the Student Executive, House Committee, Community Leaders, and the Welcome Week Leadership Team), and established social and co-curricular practices. Each element plays a role in how the college establishes and promotes safety, respect and inclusion, while also shaping how behaviours are normalised or challenged, and determining how concerns are raised and addressed.

As is the case with many residential colleges across Australia, these structures and practices operate alongside informal norms that vary across cohorts and social settings. While Wesley College has undertaken significant cultural reform and continues to strengthen its modelling of respectful behaviour and relationships, gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, risks can arise where historical practices, imported norms from schooling environments, social hierarchies, or casualised behaviours persist. The analysis below identifies key enablers, systemic risks and barriers within Wesley College's current context, recognising the significant progress made in recent years, as well as the areas requiring ongoing attention to prevent emergence of harmful behaviours and to sustain a safe and inclusive residential culture.

Sources of information

- Broderick Cultural Renewal Review 2017
- Alex Shehadie 2023 Cultural Review
- Consultation with 2025 Student Executive team
- Weekly Community Leader meetings with Director of Students
- Consultation with relevant staff, including the Master, Director of Students, Director of Programs, College Counsellor, and Chaplain

Structures, norms and practices

Enablers

- Wesley College's values of Community, The Individual, Achievement and Inclusiveness articulate a commitment to respect, safety, equity and shared responsibility. The values emphasise respect for others, personal responsibility, active participation in community life, and valuing diversity of gender, background and thought. These values provide a strong foundation for promoting respectful behaviours and preventing gender-based violence when consistently translated into everyday expectations, leadership practices and decision-making
- Wesley College's mission to provide a safe environment that supports the academic, social and personal growth of each resident is reflected in formal pastoral care structures, including:
    - A staff Pastoral Care Team led by the Master and the Director of Students, and including the Director of Programs, the College Counsellor, and the College Chaplain. The team meets fortnightly, or on demand, to discuss any student wellbeing concerns and support requirements.
    - A team of Community Leaders (appointed student leaders) who report weekly to the Director of Students. Their primary responsibilities include:
        - Responding to the safety, security and wellbeing needs of members of the Wesley College student community
        - Recognising and proactively addressing behaviours and attitudes that are unsafe or harmful to individuals, the wider community, or the college
        - Acting as role models in the community, demonstrating leadership and building a positive culture consistent with the Wesley College values.
    - A senior residential staff team, comprising the Master, Director of Students and Director of programs responsible for supporting student wellbeing, responding to concerns, and connecting residents with appropriate support services 24/7.
- Safety and wellbeing are discussed with residents at key points across the calendar, including Leadership Training Week, orientation (Welcome Week), Formal and/or Community Dinners (e.g. in the lead-up to significant social events), and during weekly wing meetings held by Community Leaders. Other communication channels, such as email, the college's Facebook group forum and individual and small group meetings, are also used to disseminate important information related to resident safety and wellbeing.
- Wesley College promotes gender equality, respect, diversity and inclusion through a combination of structured activities, leadership practices (including student leadership) and community-based initiatives rather than through a single standalone program. These include education and discussion embedded within orientation (Welcome Week) and leadership training, student-led initiatives and events that promote inclusion and respectful relationships (such as discussion forums and Town Hall meetings), and participation in University and external training (e.g. Respect @ Sydney).

	• As a co-residential college since 1969 – the first of the University of Sydney's colleges to become mixed-gender – Wesley College's culture is shaped and influenced by women at all levels within the organisation. • A high level of trust and collaboration exists between student leaders and staff at Wesley College, particularly between the Student Executive and Community Leaders with senior residential staff. This encourages robust debate and decision-making relating to student events and issues and mitigates the risk of developing shadow cultures within the community. • Wesley College Master and Council promote respectful behaviours by setting clear behavioural expectations through approved policies, codes of conduct and disciplinary frameworks. Respectful conduct is reinforced through positive and strong role-modelling by the staff, consistent responses to misconduct, and regular consideration by Council of student safety, wellbeing and risk matters.
Systemic risks	• Although Wesley College's values articulate respect, diversity and inclusion as priorities, commitments to gender equality and LGBTQIA+ inclusion are not always explicit. This may result inconsistent interpretation or application of the college's priorities across different settings, cohorts and student leadership teams. • Social dynamics in any given year can shape whose voices are most heard, and whose leadership is most visible. The college's student leadership election process encourages all students to participate in leadership roles, however male-dominated teams can be elected, depending on the dynamics within a particular cohort, influencing the level of representation of women's voices. • Offensive or discriminatory language is casualised/normalised in some social settings and can be defended or excused as humour. • As Wesley College draws its residents from diverse school environments, there is a risk that some norms and behaviours from these school cultures are imported into College life. This may include attitudes towards gender, sexuality, hierarchy, alcohol use, and consent that are inconsistent with the Wesley College values and expectations. • Some historical behaviours have caused harm to women and LGBTQIA+ residents, such as unapproved Students' Club publications and normalisation of homophobic language in certain settings. • Despite training/onboarding and orientation efforts, resistance to reporting incidents, and a reluctance to seek wellbeing/mental health support (e.g. due to assumptions around stigma), can exist. This can be particularly pronounced for students from rural/regional areas, or more generally due to cultural norms around self-reliance, privacy, or perceptions around social consequences. • Historical differences in resourcing (e.g. Students' Club funding), visibility or resident support for some gendered activities (e.g. women's sport) may reinforce perceptions of inequality or imbalance.

Barriers	• Efforts to shift behavioural norms and practices may be resisted by some residents where these behaviours or 'traditions' are perceived as being central to "college culture". • Cultural change can be influenced by external factors, such as the experiences of alumni (Old Collegians) being passed on to younger generations, with those residents wanting to replicate experiences that pre-date cultural reform. • The annual turnover of student population creates an ongoing challenge in sustaining cultural change and requires repetition and reinforcement of training/development messages to maintain progress. • Residents can develop an over-reliance on student leaders (e.g. the Community Leader team) to address issues or concerns with peers, avoiding direct, face-to-face interventions that may be more effective in shifting casualised/normalised behaviours.
Key actions in response	• Ongoing behavioural monitoring, education and intervention is required to ensure problematic historical behaviours, structures, norms and practices do not re-emerge, and that respectful norms are consistently upheld across the college. • Enhance training to strengthen residents' confidence in navigating reporting pathways, support-seeking, and difficult conversations (e.g. intervention). • Review Students' Club resourcing to ensure equity in allocations across gender-specific activities. • Increase visibility of internal and external support options, including RespectX. • Conduct pre- and post-event evaluations of Students' Club events to assess outcomes, including formal consideration of student voice (e.g. experience surveys) for major events, such as Welcome Week.

Area of operation: Systems and infrastructure

Wesley College has established a multi-layered system of infrastructure, protocols, and support mechanisms designed to promote resident safety, enable timely disclosure, and support effective incident response. These systems combine digital reporting and case management tools, physical security infrastructure, clear staff and student leadership coverage, and defined communication channels to ensure residents can access support at any time. Collectively, the systems are intended to balance accessibility, surveillance and privacy within a residential college environment.

Core elements of this infrastructure include a highly secure digital reporting and case management platform (RespectX), multiple formal and informal disclosure/reporting pathways, and 24/7 on-site staffing supported by trained Community Leaders. These are complemented by physical security measures such as controlled building access, electronic room locking, effective lighting, and CCTV coverage in common and transitional areas, alongside robust IT systems governing access to student information. Wesley College's systems are designed to provide layered protection, enable early intervention wherever required or requested, and ensure residents are equipped to seek support in ways that align with their individual needs, preferences, and sense of safety.

Sources of information

- Consultation with 2025 Student Executive team
- Weekly Community Leader meetings with Director of Students
- Consultation with relevant staff, including the Master, Director of Students, Director of Programs, Director of Finance, and Operations Manager
- Review of relevant College policies, including the Social Media Policy
- High level review of locking and CCTV systems, in collaboration with staff and contractors

Systems and infrastructure

Enablers	• Wesley College has implemented RespectX as its secure reporting platform. Residents are required to complete onboarding training as part of their orientation and can choose to report any incident formally (named) or informally (anonymously) through the system. System Administrators include the Master and the Director of Students only, and case managers can be assigned depending on the nature of the report and the individual's specific need/request for support. Residents are also able to request wellbeing support through the platform. • Wesley College staff are present on site 24/7, providing immediate support for all students, if required. Senior residential staff, including the Director of Students and the Director or Programs, are rostered for weekend duty coverage. An on-duty Community Leader is available at all times outside of office hours, including 24/7 over the weekend. Community Leaders complete regular walkarounds, including a nightly walkaround at approximately 11pm, to ensure ongoing awareness of resident wellbeing. The main entrance to the college is monitored by the Front Office Manager and all contractors are directed to operations staff to formally check in. • All residents are required to have the Community Leader duty phone number saved to their personal phone for emergency contact or out-of-office-hours support. The college's eight Community Leaders are located in different wings of the college. All residents know their Community Leader personally (due to dedicated time during orientation), and personal contact details are shared for situations where the on-duty Community Leader is not best-placed to support (i.e. non-urgent issues requiring a relational approach). Residents are actively encouraged by staff and the broader student leadership team to build relationships with other Community Leaders to establish a connection with the person they are most comfortable with. • CCTV is strategically placed throughout the college to enhance resident safety, with coverage focusing on all access points, common areas, other key facilities (e.g. the Dining Hall), and outdoor areas, whilst offering privacy in personal spaces. The Master, Director of Students, and the Operations Manager have the ability to review footage for safety and security purposes, both on-site and remotely. • Wesley College uses an electronic lock (swipe card) system across the college. All residents have secure access to their room, and the ability to lock their door at all times. Functionality is offered for students to choose to leave their door unlocked at their discretion. Access to locked student rooms can otherwise only obtained by a Community Leader (in case of a lock-out) or specific staff (for emergency or maintenance purposes). • The lighting and the layout of the college is designed to minimise isolated areas and promote visibility, whilst creating a homely, welcoming, and comfortable environment. • Access to residents' personal information is secured through the college's Student Management System (SMS) and is restricted to staff through two-factor authentication. Students are provided with staff phone numbers, email addresses and Facebook Messenger contact information. Students are required to join the Wesley College staff-managed Facebook group for the dissemination of important information. Any other group communication (e.g. student groups, wing chats) is engaged in at the discretion of the resident and is governed by the Wesley College Social Media Policy.

Systemic risks	• Wesley College is a highly relational environment, and informal norms and high trust levels amongst residents may, at times, limit effectiveness of formal safety systems, such as default door-locking. These positive attitudes can unintentionally normalise risk-tolerant behaviours, reducing the effectiveness of safeguards designed to prevent harm. • CCTV coverage is incomplete in order to preserve privacy in residential spaces. As a result, certain transitional areas, internal corridors, stairwells, and semi-private spaces fall outside camera visibility. This creates unavoidable blind spots, limiting the college's capacity to verify events. • CCTV footage is also retained for a limited period, which may restrict the ability to conduct extended retrospective reviews. Delayed disclosures/reports may be made after relevant footage has been overwritten or deleted, reducing the availability of objective evidence to support investigations or risk assessments.
Barriers	• Wesley College carefully balances the need for safety monitoring with residents' reasonable expectations of privacy in their living spaces. This limits the extent to which surveillance (e.g. CCTV) can be deployed within residential areas, which has implications on the college's ability to both detect and verify. • Wesley College's multiple options to support residents (e.g. digital platforms, duty phones, Community Leaders, the College Counsellor, senior staff and external options) increases reporter choice but may also create decision paralysis for potential reporters, particularly during times of distress. Students may delay disclosure while trying to determine the "correct" pathway. • Open-door norms are common at Wesley College, signalling high levels of trust within the community. However, this inconsistent use of electronic locking systems may undermine security, and some residents may be resistant to change do to perceived social significance.
Key actions in response	• Undertake a comprehensive review of current CCTV coverage and make adjustments where necessary to optimise the balance between privacy and surveillance. • In collaboration with Community Leaders and the Student Executive, review current open-door practices and consider introducing new messaging around promoting more security-conscious practices with the intention of enhancing personal and collective safety. This messaging could be embedded in orientation and reinforced through Community Leader conversations and periodically refreshed during the academic year. • Increase the use of practical nudges around security (e.g. signage, Facebook reminders during high-risk periods such as major social events) to support consistency without mandating compliance.

Area of operation: Service delivery

Wesley provides a holistic residential experience for undergraduate University of Sydney students. There is a strong sense of community, with students engaged in service design and delivery and invested in building college culture. 260 students live in single rooms, most with shared bathroom facilities. Student rooms are cleaned once a week. 21 meals a week are provided, including a formal dinner with external speakers and a student-led community dinner, and all students have equal access to shared cooking facilities, study spaces, common rooms and outdoor areas. The college has a bar which is open only for approved events and can only be accessed by Wesley residents.

The college provides a range of services and resources to support residents to navigate university life and achieve their full potential. This includes a tutorial program, led by senior students or graduates and 1:1 academic support on request. Networking and career-skills sessions are offered periodically. A wide range of college events are offered each semester, including men's and women's sports competitions, a performing arts competition and a variety of social events. The college conducts formal training for residents in a leader training week in February, Welcome Week and periodically throughout the year and brings expert speakers to the college through our program of formal dinner speakers.

Wesley has a 24/7 staffing model, with three staff residing on site, and has a pastoral care team including a full-time on-site counsellor. The presence of senior residential staff onsite ensures that residents can access support and advice out of hours if necessary.

Sources of information

- Feedback from staff and residents
- Schedules and feedback from information and training sessions provided to student leaders and freshers before and during welcome week
- Semesterly dinner, speaker and seminar schedules

Service delivery

Enablers	• Wesley College is a close-knit residential community in which all residents and staff know each other on a first-name basis. Residents are, and feel, known by each other and by staff. This high level of visibility enables and supports a culture of personal accountability and a respect for shared social norms and expectations. A sense of belonging and being seen and known also allows for any wellbeing concerns or potential breaches of behavioural expectation to be rapidly identified and addressed through the college's multi-level pastoral care structures. • As the first University of Sydney residential college to become co-educational (in 1969), Wesley College has well-established services for both male and female students. All bathrooms and common spaces are all-gender, establishing consistency of access to facilities. • Co-location in a single building and centralised shared facilities provides for frequent interaction between residents and with staff. The frequency of interactions between staff and residents provides opportunities to model and reinforce positive messages about gender, respect and diversity and embed these into both formal and informal settings and interactions. • Regular shared meals in the Dining Hall, including two compulsory whole-of-college dinners each week, provide regular opportunities to discuss issues and set expectations with the whole community. The opportunity to have speakers or seminars at or after dinner provides opportunities to bring external experts in gender, inclusion, diversity etc. to engage with residents in situ. • Joint ownership of the college's social and event calendar by College staff and the student executive and fortnightly planning meetings ensure shared design and delivery of events and intentional consideration of issues of safety and inclusiveness by a diverse group of stakeholders. • Wesley College has an appropriate staffing profile to provide holistic oversight and student support, including three senior staff who reside on-site. A full-time, on-site counsellor provides a confidential avenue for students to raise issues and seek support for any reason, including any issues related to gender-based violence. • Single-occupancy student rooms (no shared rooms) ensures that all residents have a private and secure space. • Leader Training Week and Welcome Week were overhauled following the Broderick Review in 2017 and are reviewed and renewed annually each year with a lens on respect, diversity, inclusion, safety and gender-based violence • All residents are students at the University of Sydney, allowing for clear and consistent advice, policy, training and reporting processes and experiences in relation to gender-based violence messaging across the college.

Systemic risks	• Differing levels of education and awareness about gender-based and consent issues across schools, resulting in varying levels of awareness and understanding of issues among the fresher cohort at the point of entry to the college. • Historic underrepresentation of some groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, LGBTQIA+, English as a second language speakers, students with disabilities) and intersectional issues could result in "blind spots" in service delivery for students. Differing experiences and levels of awareness of gender-based violence and related within the alumni cohort, which need to be considered in alumni-student interactions (e.g. events, mentoring, dinner speakers, students with parents who attended the college).
Barriers	• Students are time-poor and increasingly engaged in paid work, making it more difficult to engage the full community in education and training events within the college outside of the formal leader training and Welcome Week periods. • The on-site, highly personalised nature of students' experience at the college sets expectations about training and service delivery which are not met by online or remote programs (e.g. online training modules), so in-person training is highly preferable. • Experts in gender-based violence-related topics are in high demand and scheduling suitable times for them to provide sessions when students are available to attend can be difficult during semester. • The cost of bringing in external training facilitators and experts continues to increase.
Key actions in response	• Continue to embed respect in norms, informal interactions and official events • Continue to conduct annual reviews and renewal of leader training and Welcome Week programs to embed conversations about respect and gender equality and ensure that student leaders and new residents are suitably trained and prepared for college life. • Provide ongoing training, education and appropriate forums for conversations about equality and respect throughout the year, as outlined in the structures, norms and practices section of this assessment. • Continue to ensure gender equity and representation across service-delivery and student-facing roles (e.g. dinner speakers, tutors). • Ensure that consultation with students on the design and delivery of services includes diverse voices and students from historically underrepresented groups.

Area of operation: Policies and procedures

Wesley College's policies and procedures establish the framework for a safe, respectful and inclusive residential environment in which the rights and responsibilities of individuals are promoted and protected, behavioural expectations are established, and effective reporting options and pathways are clearly set out. All policies are written in clear and inclusive language and are designed to be accessible. The college's policy framework was reviewed and extensively renewed following the Broderick Review and policies are regularly reviewed at the College Council as well as discussed with students during Leader Training Week, Welcome Week, and throughout the year.

The College policies and procedures on sexual misconduct and gender-based violence have been designed to harmonise with those of the University of Sydney to provide a consistent framework for students, and a new Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence and Prevention and Response Policy is being drafted to align with the University's policy of the same name. A person-centred, trauma informed, safety-focused approach underpins these policies, with clear options and pathways for disclosures and reports. Other policies relating to alcohol use and social media emphasise safety, harm-minimisation and responsible decision-making.

Sources of information

- Wesley College Council Agenda and Minutes
- Broderick Review 2017
- Alex Shehadie Cultural Review 2023
- Internal review of policy frameworks and associated procedures.
- Key Wesley College Policies:
    - Alcohol Policy
    - Discipline Policy
    - Harassment and Discrimination Policy
    - Sexual Misconduct Policy (currently being revised as the Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence and Prevention and Response Policy to align with the updated University of Sydney policy)
    - Social Media Policy

Policies and procedures

Enablers	• College policies relating to gender-based violence are being revised in preparation for the introduction of the National Code and reflect best-practice in relation to inclusiveness, and person-centric and trauma-informed approaches. • All Wesley College policies have been designed to represent and be inclusive of historically underrepresented groups, and this is a consideration in all policy reviews. • Wesley College governance processes assure regular review of policies and are flexible enough to allow for rapid changes to policy if required. • Reporting options for residents have been strengthened through the introduction of the RespectX platform, allowing for anonymous and online disclosures about gender-based violence and other issues, in addition to existing in-person and electronic channels. • The student community is generally supportive of efforts to increase safety and support diversity and inclusion, and student leaders engage actively and constructively in conversations about policies and procedures. • Policies and procedures are accessible online, posted on noticeboards and staff are available 24/7 to address any policy-related issues.
Systemic risks	• Residents may not read or recall policies and rely on informal sources of information and perceived cultural norms to inform behaviours. • Residents' attitudes and prior experiences with policies and reporting (e.g. at school or university) may affect their willingness and sense of safety in engaging with reporting processes. • Students from historically underrepresented groups may have limited time or capacity to engage in policy review processes. • New technologies (e.g. tracking devices) present new risks which may not be well understood or adequately captured in policy documents. • Excessive policy consultation processes, additions or changes lead to overload or disengagement from students. • Potential for gaps or inconsistencies across multiple documents.
Barriers	• Normalised practice of accepting terms and signing documents such as residency contract without reading them. • Lack of awareness or understanding of policies across the college. • Reports and anecdotes about negative historical incidents may compromise confidence in policies and processes.

Key actions in response	• Introduce an overarching Student Code of Conduct to set clear rules, values and standards about respect, diversity, inclusion and safety across the college. • Embed information about the National Code and associate policies and a new Code of Conduct in renewed 2026 Leader and Welcome Week training. • Engage student leaders, not only staff, in delivering sessions about policy during Welcome Week to increase new student engagement and awareness. • Raise awareness of the National Code and the new Code of Conduct with returning students via multiple platforms including posts on physical and electronic noticeboards and announcements at dinners. • Run information sessions promoting reporting options to residents throughout the year. • Ensure regular policy review cycle is maintained and includes consultation with representative samples of students.

Area of operation: Management and governance

Wesley College was established under its own Incorporations Act in NSW Parliament in 1910. It was allocated an allotment of land within the Crown land parcel at the University of Sydney. Due to delays in commencement of establishing a college, the Methodist Church lost the land to the establishment of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Subsequently, a smaller plot of land was agreed to from the original Anglican Church allocation, where St Paul's College was established in 1850 and Wesley College commenced its build in 1910 on Western Avenue within the University of Sydney. Wesley opened in 1917 with nine students in residence.

Wesley College has remained true to its establishment act, only accepting students from The University of Sydney throughout its 109 years of operation.

The composition of the Wesley College Council has been regularly reviewed to ensure it meets modern governance standards. A complete governance review was undertaken in 2008, resulting in changes to the By-Laws to allow for a broader candidature to hold the position of Master of the college, beyond a member of the clergy as well as a significant reduction in the size of the Council. A further review was undertaken in 2018, allowing for a skills-based member appointment to be made outside the Old Collegian and Uniting Church representation.

Operational leadership is delegated to the Master, who is CEO and holds a position on Council. This structure allows for clear lines of accountability and reporting.

The Council meets five times per academic year, with several sub committees of Council meeting more regularly to oversight specific areas of the operations.

Sources of information

- Wesley College Incorporations Act 1910
- Wesley College By-Laws
- Wesley College Vision Mission and Values Statement
- Wesley College Strategy
- UCA ‘Safer College Communities’ Document

Management and governance

Enablers	• The appointment of Members of the Wesley College Council is governed by a set of By-Laws linked to the college's Incorporations Act 1910. Changes to the By-Laws are required to be presented and approved through the Synod of Uniting Church in NSW. The current membership of the Council reflects a balanced gender split, including a provision for the two Student Representatives, reflecting the same gender balance. • Since the 2017 Broderick Review, the Council added a further pillar to its strategy to incorporate Cultural Renewal as a key focus at governance level. This ensures regular discussion about culture-setting and culture checks, which extends to discussion about behavioural concerns and harm-prevention strategies and education at Council level. • The Council and staff management team takes a values-based approach to its oversight of the college. This ensures that the values of respect, diversity and inclusion are represented in the everyday activities and the policies and procedures and strongly embedded in all aspects of college operations. • Wesley College has an evergreen strategy, one that is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the current college operations and needs and can be changed easily to reflect emerging needs of the college. • The management and staff team is diverse and represents a cross section of geographic and cultural backgrounds, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. • Wesley College's vision, mission and values statement, along with the College Strategy, represent the college's commitment to diversity and inclusion across the organisation.

Systemic risks	• The Wesley College Council is a voluntary board and relies on people putting themselves forward and giving their time and expertise freely. This creates a risk that, at any given time, the available candidate pool may not fully reflect the desired mix of skills, experience or diversity needed to provide breadth of perspective and effective governance oversight. • While the current composition of Council is diverse and reflects a good gender balance, there is an ongoing need to ensure that governance practices consistently prioritise gender-based violence prevention and response. This includes reflection on whether past decision-making, responses or sanctions have been appropriate, proportionate and aligned with contemporary expectations. • While the current diversity of the college staff cohort is a strength, staff attrition and turnover may affect this balance over time, requiring ongoing attention to recruitment and retention practices. • Traditional gendered hierarchies can present challenges in college governance and management contexts. Wesley College's long-standing co-educational status (since 1969) and the resulting diversity within its alumni base help to mitigate these risks, though continued vigilance is required. • Historically, resourcing for prevention-focused programs and activities has varied, presenting a risk that prevention efforts may not always receive sustained or consistent investment.
Barriers	• Membership of Council is partially constrained by eligibility requirements set out in the By-Laws, and the voluntary, unremunerated nature of the role can limit the ability to attract a broader pool of candidates with diverse backgrounds and expertise. • Diversity in Gender, Age and Experience is important. Attracting younger or diverse background candidates to Council roles can be challenging, particularly given competing family and work commitments and limited pool requirements under the By Laws at the time required to contribute effectively to governance.
Key actions in response	• While there is reference to unacceptable behaviour and a 'zero tolerance' response, explicit reference to gender-based violence is not consistently embedded across strategic documents, values statements and policies. A comprehensive review of relevant documentation is required to ensure that gender-based violence prevention and response are clearly and explicitly articulated. • Introduce a specific gender-based violence reporting section to Council Papers to enhance visibility of work in this area, including prevention, education, prevalence data and incident reporting.

Area of operation: Community engagement

Wesley College's admissions process prioritises students from rural and remote areas in NSW and interstate, with a small minority of students coming from the greater Sydney metropolitan area. The college also values diversity in source schools and applies an informal "cap" of 2-3 students from each year group in any one school in each intake. The college works with the University of Sydney's outreach teams to support pathway programs for Indigenous and regional high school students but does not market directly to schools. Applicants' family connections to the college are considered as one of many factors in making admissions decisions but do not determine admission. The college engages with potential students through our social media content, at the University's annual Open Day and via our website.

All residents at Wesley are undergraduate students at the University of Sydney, which exerts a strong institutional influence on residents' norms and experiences.

Wesley College maintains strong relationships with alumni ("Old Cols"), many of whom make substantial contributions to the college through scholarships, mentoring, networking, as guest speakers or as the parents of current college residents. Many of our Old Cols came to the college as regional students. As Wesley has been coeducational for over 50 years, women make up a substantial proportion of our Old Col community. In accordance with wider social norms, some groups, including LGBTQIA+ and Indigenous students have been historically underrepresented in Wesley's student cohort, and this is reflected in the composition of the Old Col community. As the college's culture has changed through the decades, Old Cols may have had experiences during their time at college that are not consistent with current laws, norms and practices, particularly in relation to alcohol and gender.

Sources of information

- Admissions processes and staff feedback
- Conversations with alumni (Old Cols)

Community engagement	
Enablers	• Wesley College maintains independence from schools and other stakeholders in relation to admissions, which allows admissions decisions to be made in accordance with College values. • The college establishes and sustains strong and engaged relationships with key Old Cols, many of whom are highly supportive of efforts to continue to improve college culture. • Positive changes to traditions such as "O-week" following the Broderick Review have reset many aspects of the culture in ways that are visible and send positive signals for our communities, and have created momentum for continued change • Positive changes to policies, processes and services in relation to gender-based violence at the University of Sydney, including the University's Gender-based Violence Action Plan and the establishment of the 'Safer Communities Office'. • Social media channels provide an opportunity to regularly promote and showcase College values and experiences to potential students and to Old Cols to influence their attitudes and expectations.
Systemic risks	• Lower representation of some groups (low-SES; public school; Indigenous) in the University of Sydney cohort limits the applicant pool for the college. The perceived expense of residential colleges and the cost of living in Sydney can also be an obstacle for these groups. • Wesley College's wide range of source schools limits visibility of the norms, experiences and expectations that students bring to college. • Old Cols can have differing expectations and understanding of issues related to gender-based violence and some may be resistant to changes to some traditions or norms. • Students whose parents are Old Cols may bring expectations of outdated behaviours or experiences to college.
Barriers	• Public and political perceptions of residential colleges as an unsafe or unwelcoming place for some groups of students can exist, based on historical cases and media reports.

Key actions in response	• Continue to prioritise diversity in admissions processes and monitor outcomes. • Continue to work with the University of Sydney, particularly in relation to priority admissions pathways for students from underrepresented groups, and student services and support including reporting channels for gender-based violence. • Ensure our social media content reflects our values and the diversity of our students' voices. • Continue conversations with our Old Col community to build understanding of, and trust in, the Wesley College culture.