

Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Trigger warning: This email contains mention of sexual violence, harassment, coercion and assault.

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that the University of Canberra will be participating in the National Student Safety Survey from Monday 6 September to Sunday 3 October. The survey will be inviting students to report their experiences in relation to sexual harassment and assault in a university setting.

The survey is part of a broader conversation happening across Australia around sexual assault and sexual harassment, consent and respectful behaviour. Sexual violence of any nature, including harassment and assault, has no place in society, and certainly no place at UC.

The survey has been planned over a number of months and while we understand that the timing under the current circumstances of lockdown may not be the most ideal, there is the belief from students across Australia that the survey is vitally important to informing future strategies to address sexual violence in our society.

And we share that belief. The findings of this survey will help the UC community – students and staff – to play an important role in informing the conversation and shaping a future where everyone is, and feels, safe and respected.

A random selection of 10,000 UC students will be invited to participate in the survey, which means that not all students will be selected to participate in the survey. But they are being given the opportunity to tell their story in their own words.

If they have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault or any other unwanted sexual behaviour, they will be able to participate in the NSSS parallel process either as a current student or recent graduate (graduated within the last five years). They can share their stories via the [NSSS website](#).

By sharing their experience and providing insight into how they were supported, or not, and what universities can do better, is important, and will inform our responses to student safety and wellbeing in the future.

We understand that conversations about sexual assault and sexual harassment can be difficult, challenging and potentially triggering especially in the current context of the

lockdown. For this reason, I want to remind you of the following support services available to our students should they approach you for support or advice.

- **The University of Canberra Medical and Counselling Centre** provides a range of health, wellbeing and counselling support services and are available 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday. You can reach Medical and Counselling on **(02) 6201 2351**.
- Students can access **the University's dedicated Crisis Line**, operated by Lifeline, which is available after business hours (24 hours over weekends and public holidays). If they are seeking support, they can free call **1300 271 790**, or text on **0488 884 227**. The University Crisis Line is available to all students, regardless of their location.
- Further support can be provided by our **Wellbeing Team**, they can be contacted via email at wellbeing@canberra.edu.au.
- **1800RESPECT**, the national sexual assault, family and domestic counselling service, is available 24 hours, seven days a week on **1800 737 732** or at **1800respect.org.au**.
- Further detail on support services available to our students can be found on the [University's Safe Community website](#).

In turn, we are aware that you may find yourself triggered by these conversations. If so, I encourage you to access our [Employee Assistance Program](#) counselling service, alternatively please reach out to any of the other support services highlighted above.

If you would like to find out more about UC's response to sexual assault, harassment, gender-based violence, coercion or harassment, please visit our [Safe and Respectful Community](#) website.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you do to support our students. We understand that the situation we currently find ourselves in is not easy for any one of us and we are here to support you as a University community, so please reach out to ucpeople@canberra.edu.au if you need any further advice.

Please take care and I wish you all the very best.

Paddy

Professor Paddy Nixon FRSA FBCS

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