

Message from the Vice-Chancellor

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

Dear student

An important conversation is 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.

Everyone has the right to expect that they will be safe wherever they live, study, work and socialise. This belief is central to our commitment to address sexual assault and sexual harassment under the Respect. Now. Always. campaign.

The National Student Safety Survey

To further this commitment, the University of Canberra is joining all universities across Australia in the National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) being run throughout September this year. The NSSS will be run by the Social Research Centre (SRC) on behalf of the universities.

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 cohort of 10,000 students will be invited to participate in the survey, which will run from Monday 6 September to Sunday 3 October. This is a random sample of our student community, which means that only some of you will be invited to participate in the survey.

If you are invited to participate in the survey, please seriously consider doing so. Your voice is important, and we want to hear from you through this safe space, where your anonymity is secured.

Support available to you

We understand that conversations about sexual assault and sexual harassment can be difficult, challenging and potentially triggering. For this reason, I want to remind you that there are support services available to you:

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**.

You 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 you are seeking support, you can free call **1300 271 790**, or text on **0488 884 227**. The University Crisis Line is available to all students, regardless of your location.

Further support can be provided by our **Wellbeing Team**, please contact them 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 **1800respect.org.au**.

Further detail on support services available to you can be found on the [University's Safe Community website](#).

Share your story if you are not invited to participate in the NSSS

Not all students will be selected to participate in the survey. But we want to give everyone the opportunity to tell their story in their own words.

If you have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault or any other form of unwanted sexual behaviour, we would like to hear from you in this parallel process. It may be something that happened on- or off-campus; among friends or colleagues; when participating in sport or at sporting clubs, student societies or other social gatherings; in student accommodation or on university fieldtrips.

To contribute to this part of the NSSS survey, you can either be a current or recent (graduated within the last five years) university student to take part. Share your story via the [NSSS website](#).

Sharing your experience and how you were supported, or not, and what universities can do better, is important, and will further inform our responses to student safety and wellbeing in the future.

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.

At the same time, if you would like to report an incident, please make use of our [Online Reporting Tool](#). All reports are handled in the strictest confidence.

And please contact our Wellbeing Team, if you would like further advice or assistance.

Please take care during this time, reach out if you need support and thank you for taking the time to help the University chart a way forward towards an all-encompassing safe and respectful community.

Paddy

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