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Murdoch University Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Report 2024

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Building a brighter
future, together.



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1 Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Murdoch University is situated on the lands of the Whadjuk and Binjareb Noongar people. We pay our respects to their enduring and dynamic culture and the leadership of Noongar elders past and present. The Boodjar (country) on which Murdoch University is located has, for thousands of years, been a place of learning. We at Murdoch University are proud to continue this long tradition.

2 Introduction

Murdoch University is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for all members of our community. This annual report on sexual harm prevention and response reflects our dedication to addressing and eliminating gender-based violence within our institution.

In alignment with the Universities Australia Charter on Sexual Harm, we recognise that all forms of sexual harm are abhorrent and have no place in our society. We are dedicated to strengthening, developing, and implementing policies

and initiatives that make clear that sexual harm is not acceptable, and to provide education and awareness raising to prevent incidents from occurring. We take all allegations seriously, regardless of the seniority or status of the person against whom a claim is made.

This report also aligns with the Department of Education's initiatives to address and prevent gender-based violence through setting clear standards and expectations for higher education providers. These standards emphasise the importance of accountable governance and leadership, effective organisational policies and practices, trauma-informed procedures, evidence-based education and training, expert and timely support services, transparent data and reporting, and safe student accommodation.

Over the past year, Murdoch University has made significant strides in enhancing our sexual harm prevention and response efforts. We have provided training programs, improved awareness of our reporting mechanisms, and strengthened our support services to ensure that all members of our community feel safe and supported. However, it is also recognised that there is much work still to be done and, drawing from recent developments in legislation and compliance requirements, the University has undertaken an internal review and gap analysis with a commitment to responding to and addressing the identified shortfalls in practice.

This report provides an overview of our achievements, challenges, and future priorities in sexual harm prevention and response. We are committed to continuous improvement and will continue to work collaboratively with our community and external partners to create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

3 Governance

Murdoch University has developed a comprehensive Sexual Harm Policy and Procedure to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all members of its community.

The Policy covers the entire university community, including students, staff, visitors, and contractors. It defines sexual harm as any unwelcome, unwanted act or behaviour of a sexual nature, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse. The policy is based on trauma-informed principles, aiming to maximise support and agency for individuals making disclosures. It ensures that the processes are sensitive to the needs of those affected by sexual harm.

The Procedures provide guidance to ensure that a robust and procedurally fair approach is taken whilst ensuring that the discloser is placed at the centre of the process in a trauma informed and supportive way. The procedures have been developed to provide a responsive and culturally appropriate approach is taken in all cases and across all campuses of the University.

3.1 Sexual Harm Response

Within the Sexual Harm Policy and Procedures, Murdoch University has established a structure to oversee the response when sexual harm has occurred. This structure includes several key components:

- Disclosures and reports: the university provides a distinction between a disclosure and a formal report. This enables people who have experienced sexual harm to first seek out support for themselves and then make an informed decision about their next steps.
- Sexual Harm Support Officer (SHSO): The SHSO handles confidential and anonymous disclosures of sexual harm incidents. Information from these disclosures are reviewed and utilised to inform actions to make Murdoch a safer space.
- Trauma informed investigation and decision making: The Procedures align to necessary standards and compliance with student and workplace grievances; however, these are augmented by the SHSOs as a support for the discloser, and a Sexual Harm Review Panel (SHRP) for decision making. The SHRP is a small panel of staff with appropriate subject matter expertise to inform decision making of the Chair (sole decision maker, who is a senior leader). This includes a member with a mental health clinical background, with knowledge of the application of trauma informed principles.

4 Sexual Harm Prevention

Whilst it is important to have robust response processes for when sexual harm has occurred, the University has a positive duty to take steps to prevent incidents occurring. Prevention activities are led by different areas of the University based on expertise and intended audiences.

- **Access, Wellbeing & Equity (AW&E):** The AW&E teams play a crucial role in supporting student wellbeing and equity, including
 - promoting awareness of what is sexual harm and how to make disclosures,
 - providing training on responding to disclosures and trauma-informed practices,
 - providing training on respectful relationships to students
- **Pro Vice Chancellor Equity Diversity & Inclusion (PVC EDI):** As part of their broad responsibilities, the PVC EDI Team provide leadership in the space of addressing gender inequities in recognition of the role these play in sexual harm and gender-based violence. The PVC EDI holds responsibility for the University response to national drivers in the prevention of sexual harm and is also responsible for leading internal review of complaints processes. This review is to ensure contemporary, accessible and inclusive approach to complaints management is implemented for all members of the University community.
- **People and Culture Office:** Provides training as part of onboarding for all employees, which covers standards of behaviour and expectations that relate to sexual harm.
 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Bullying and Harassment
 - Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion

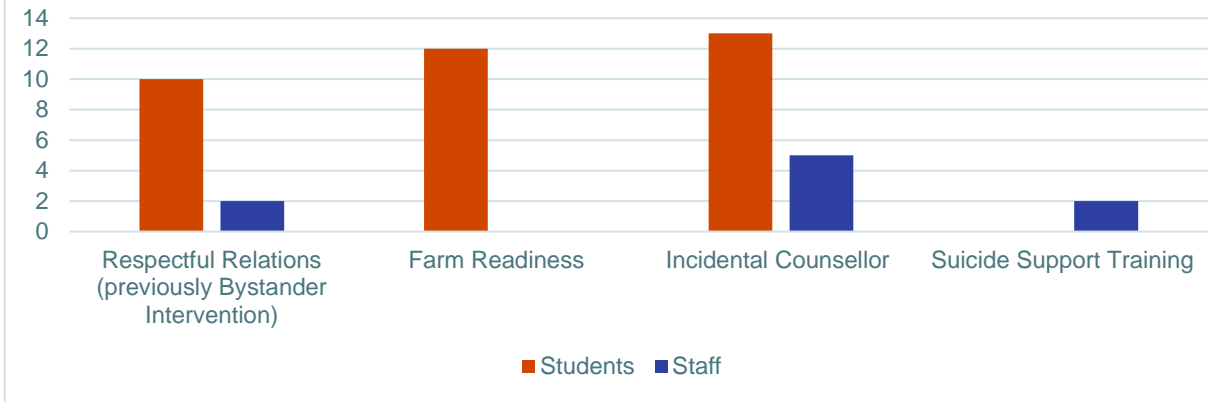
4.1 Respectful Communities

Murdoch University is committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive community. This involves promoting strong and equitable governance, implementing preventative measures, and creating functional monitoring and evaluation structures. Our commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is at the heart of this through our 2023-2030 EDI Sub-Strategy. This aims to build a genuinely inclusive community that celebrates diversity and promotes social justice. This strategy, shaped through a co-design process involving key stakeholders, outlines our vision to become a sector leader in EDI by addressing barriers, challenging biases, and empowering individuals to thrive and succeed. By creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, we ensure that all members of our community can reach their full potential and contribute to a safe, respectful and supportive campus culture.

4.2 Training and Capacity Building

The University provides a range of training and education that supports the prevention and response to incidents of sexual harm. The sessions are provided for and tailored to meet the needs of students and staff. Developed by members of the student wellbeing teams, with specialised knowledge, skills and experience, all content is peer reviewed and adapted further following input and/or feedback from students and staff attendees.

Trainings Facilitated for Students and Staff



Respectful Relations (previously Bystander Intervention) aims to provide staff & students with knowledge and practical skills to reduce discrimination, harassment and assault. This training is offered within the curriculum of a career learning spine unit.

Farm Readiness is a workshop facilitated for students preparing to commence their farm practicums. It aims to build an understanding of what bullying and harassment are (including sexual harm) and ways to respond in unsafe situations. The sexual harm content was included in response to the growing evidence relating to women in farming communities experiencing increased rates of sexual assault and harassment compared to those in urban settings

Incidental Counsellor aims to help participants understand mental health issues and to better equip them with skills to respond to mental health concerns of persons they work with. In the content relating to supporting people in distress, this also covers introductory content for responding to disclosures of sexual harm. This training is offered to all staff, and to students within the curriculum of a career learning spine unit and embedded within veterinary and community development courses.

Suicide Support Training is a newly developed training that aims to equip front facing student support staff to better understand and provide appropriate support when someone is suicidal.

In addition to the in-house training, the University also engages the specialist Sexual Assault Resource Centre to provide [Responding to Disclosures with Skills Rehearsal](#) for staff to further enhance ability to respond to disclosures in a trauma informed way

4.3 Awareness Raising and Communication

Murdoch University has undertaken promotions and awareness raising initiatives in relation to respectful behaviours, sexual harm, reporting and supports. These have been through awareness activities and promotional materials including flyers, posters and digital messaging.

Respect @ Uni Week
MARCH 18TH & 21ST / 11AM - 2PM
THE DEN (BELOW THE HUB)

- Monday: Self-care is respecting yourself**
 Yoga! Join us from 11am - 12pm
 Meditation! Relax with us from 12:30pm - 1pm
- Thursday: Respecting your community**
 Badge-making! Visit our Market/Daze stall
 DIY Cookies! Create a pride, ally, or consent cookie
 Plant respect! Design a succulent to take home
 Live music and free food! Imperfect King live in the Winter Garden from 11am - 1pm

Plus, see keynote speaker Matt Brown: She Is Not Your Rehab
 Live at ECU M Lawley on Monday 18th March from 5.30pm. **Registration is required** and you'll go into the draw to win a She Is Not Your Rehab book!

RESPECT FOR YOURSELF
 CULTIVATING SELF LOVE AND SELF CARE

- Healthy Eating**: Nourish your body with foods that make you feel good and provide the nutrients you need.
- Rest and Relaxation**: Ensure you get enough rest and engage in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or listening to calming music.
- Physical Activity**: Engage in physical activities that you enjoy, whether it's going for a walk, hiking, or any form of exercise that makes you feel good. Remember your body's need for movement and respect its capabilities.
- Mindful Meditation**: Cultivate a deeper sense of awareness and respect. Practice your thoughts and feelings, often turning to non-judgmental self-compassion.
- Gratitude Journaling**: Keep a gratitude journal where you can express the things that you are grateful for each day. This practice encourages you to see value and appreciation for your life's moments.
- Learn and Grow**: Invest in personal development through learning new skills or enhancing existing ones. This can include taking courses, attending workshops, or simply reading, honoring your potential for growth and learning.
- Positive Affirmations**: Use positive affirmations to boost your self-esteem and confidence.
- Setting Boundaries**: Learn how to set clear boundaries to respect and protect your energy and well-being. This involves understanding your limits and communicating them effectively to others.
- Self-Care Rituals**: Create a routine of activities that nurture your mind, body, and soul. This could include journaling, taking baths, or practicing self-compassion.

RESPECT FOR YOUR PARTNER(S)
 NURTURING SAFE, HEALTHY AND EQUITABLE ROMANTIC OR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Clear Communication**: Regularly engage in open and honest conversations about your feelings, expectations, and desires in the relationship. Share your needs, preferences, and boundaries, and encourage your partner to do the same.
- Respecting Privacy**: Respect your partner's privacy, including personal space, belongings, and digital privacy. Avoid going through their accounts or social media without permission.
- Living Together**: Allow your partner to set and apply to process their feelings and thoughts, especially during disagreements or times of stress.
- Understanding Needs**: Respect your partner's need for personal autonomy, individuality, and personal well-being, understanding that relationships and boundaries evolve over time.
- Active Consent**: Always obtain explicit consent before engaging in any form of physical intimacy. Consent should be enthusiastic, informed, and ongoing, and can be withdrawn at any time, even retroactively if it is.
- Shared Decision-Making**: Involve your partner in decisions that affect both of you, ensuring that their opinions are valued and considered.
- Reflective Conversations**: Engage in open, honest, and non-judgmental conversations with your partner, allowing them to express their own needs for relationship.

RESPECT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY
 FOSTERING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE

- Use Inclusive Language**: Be mindful of your language and strive to use terms that are inclusive and respectful of all individuals, including those with diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.
- Reflect on Personal Biases**: Take time to reflect on your own biases and consider how they might influence your actions and decisions. Being aware of personal biases can help you create a more equitable and inclusive environment.
- Support Diverse Voices**: Amplify the voices of individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, especially those who are marginalized or underrepresented. This can include joining or supporting diversity groups, participating in community events, or sharing their stories.
- Practical Active Listening**: Be an active listener when others share their experiences, especially those who are marginalized or underrepresented. Practice active listening by focusing on understanding, responding, and then remembering what is being said.
- Model Inclusive Behavior**: Lead by example by modeling inclusive behavior with respect and kindness, regardless of your background or identity. Your behavior can influence others and help create a more inclusive environment.
- Stand Against Sexist/Spectacular Behavior**: If you witness sexist or discriminatory behavior, speak up. This can be challenging, but reporting or addressing discrimination, harassment, or sexism can make a positive difference in creating a safer environment.

Respect at Uni Week, held from 18 to 22 March, is a national initiative aimed at eradicating violence in universities and promoting safety and inclusion for all students. Originating from the Victorian Tertiary Primary Prevention Network, this inaugural event saw universities across Australia unite to engage in courageous conversations, events, and opportunities to spread important safety messages and connect students with education and support services.



Staff from all 5 Western Australia Universities with Matt Brown (centre) for Respect Week

This year, all five Western Australian universities collaborated to sponsor author and advocate Matt Brown, to deliver a keynote presentation open to students and staff from all WA Universities. Matt Brown works to eradicate domestic violence by supporting those who perpetrate violence to heal. He and his wife, Sarah, founded the global anti-violence movement She Is Not Your Rehab. In his keynote, Matt emphasised the need for more conversations and support services in the family harm sector, highlighting the alarming statistics relating to the deaths of women in as a result of intimate partner violence in Australia).

In addition to the keynote, the Wellbeing and Equity Projects team organised several free activities throughout the week, focusing on themes of self-respect, community respect, allyship, and inclusion. Activities included meditation, yoga, and a community craft activity where students decorated pot plants with respectful messaging. Live music by Murdoch’s Imperfect King also helped students build meaningful connections and pledge their commitment to building respect at Murdoch.



5 Support Services and Reporting Mechanisms

Murdoch University offers a range of support services to assist students, staff, and associates who have been impacted by sexual harm. These services are designed to provide confidential, trauma-informed support and guidance. Key support services include:

1. **Sexual Harm Support Officers (SHSO):** These officers are health and mental health staff available to provide confidential support and guidance to individuals who have experienced sexual harm. They can assist with understanding the available options, accessing support services, and navigating the reporting process.
2. **Counselling Services:** The university offers free and confidential counselling services to support the mental health and wellbeing of those affected by sexual harm. These services are available to all students and veterinary school staff and can be accessed through the University's Counselling Service. Several of the Counselling Staff have a special interest and skills in working with trauma, the team members also have experience in and/or engage external specialist supervision to enhance their work with diverse and historically marginalised groups to ensure culturally responsive approaches are utilised.
3. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** For staff members, the EAP provides confidential counselling services to help resolve personal or work-related issues. This service is available for all staff 24/7 and can be accessed via phone or online.
4. **People and Culture Office:** This office provides support and assistance with the grievance process, both informal and formal. Staff can contact the People and Culture team through the Murdoch Support portal or by phone.
5. **Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Primary Contact Officers:** The University has staff members identified as Primary Contacts for people experiencing FDV. They support people to connect with tailored support services including EAP/Counselling services, and to support access to relevant FDV related leave and accommodations.
6. **University Security Service:** The Murdoch University Security Team plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of the university community. Security Officers are actively involved in managing and responding to security incidents on campus. They are trained to handle various types of incidents, including antisocial behaviour, urgent health and welfare issues, and security assistance requests. The team works closely with other university departments to ensure a coordinated response.

5.1 Reporting Mechanisms and Procedures for Making Disclosures and Reports

Murdoch University has established clear procedures for making disclosures and reports of sexual harm. These procedures are designed to ensure that individuals feel supported and that their disclosures are heard with care, empathy and confidentiality. The key steps include:

1. **Making a Disclosure:** Individuals can make a disclosure of sexual harm through the online disclosure system available on the Murdoch Respect Now Always webpage and the Murdoch Safe App. Disclosures can be made anonymously if preferred. Disclosures can also be submitted by a support person, on behalf on the individual.
2. **Review by Sexual Harm Support Officer (SHSO):** Once a disclosure is made, it is reviewed by a qualified SHSO. The SHSO will follow up by the end of the next working day if contact details are provided. They will provide additional information about internal and external support services and the formal and informal actions that can be taken. Where a sexual assault occurs, assistance is offered in relation to supporting access to external specialist services such as the Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) and support with making formal reports to WA Police.
3. **Third Party Disclosures:** Any member of the University community can make a disclosure on behalf of another person. If the person making the disclosure includes their name, they will be contacted and supported by the SHSO to enable them to support the person they have disclosed for. This enables a further layer of anonymity that may help people who have experienced sexual harm feel supported and ultimately aims to encourage them to access SHSOs and other specialised supports. **Formal Reporting:** If an individual wishes to make a formal report, they can do so through the same online system. Formal reports are progressed with the aim of taking appropriate action against the respondent while ensuring procedural fairness and minimising re-traumatisation. When a discloser makes a formal report, the SHSO will help guide them through the process, ensuring that trauma informed principles are maintained.

4. **Support for International Students:** If an international student makes a disclosure, their student visa will not be impacted. The university ensures that international students receive the same level of support and confidentiality as domestic students.

5.2 Contact Information for Relevant Support Services and Reporting Channels

These services and reporting mechanisms ensure that individuals impacted by sexual harm at Murdoch University receive the support and assistance they need in a confidential and trauma-informed manner.

- **Sexual Harm Information Page:**
 - General information links to supports, policy, procedures, and online disclosure form
 - <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/counselling/resources/respect.-now.-always>
- **Sexual Harm Support Officers (SHSO):**
 - Webpage: <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/counselling/resources/respect.-now.-always/meet-our-shso>
 - Email: MUHwelfare@murdoch.edu.au
- **Counselling Services:**
 - Webpage: <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/counselling/our-services>
 - Phone: 08 9360 1227
- **Medical Service**
 - Webpage: <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/medical/appointments>
 - Phone: 08 9360 2293
- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):**
 - Phone: 1800 808 374 (available 24/7)
- **People and Culture Office:**
 - Murdoch Support portal
 - Phone: +61 8 9360 2430 (9am to 4pm, Monday–Friday)
- **Murdoch University Security:**
 - Central security office: +61 8 9360 6262
 - Perth campus: +61 8 9360 7333 (Ext 333)
 - Mandurah campus: +61 8 9582 5555 (Ext 555)
 - Rockingham campus: +61 8 9553 7333
 - Email: security@murdoch.edu.au

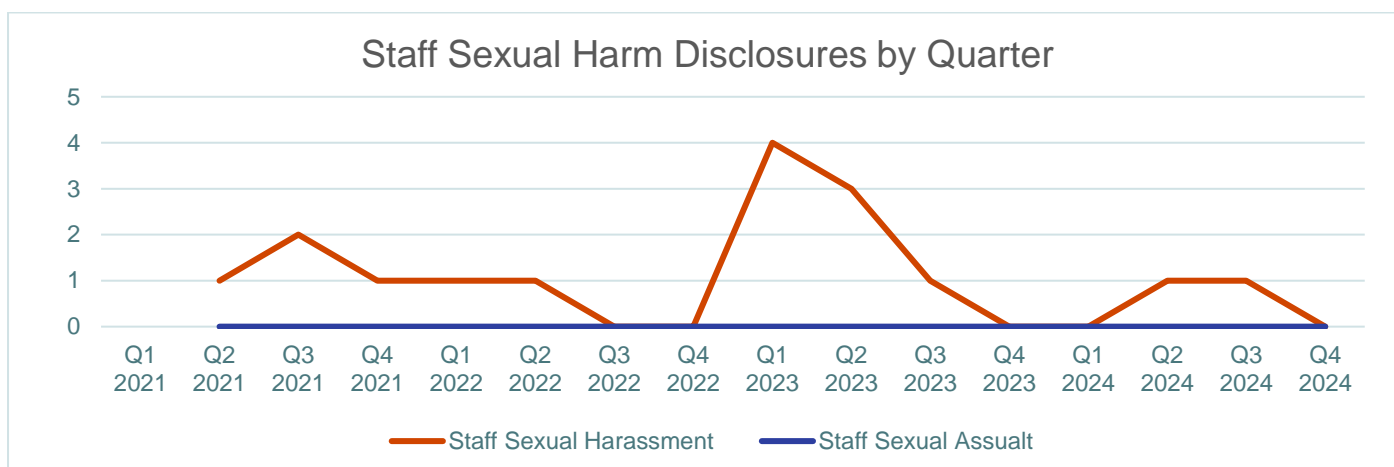
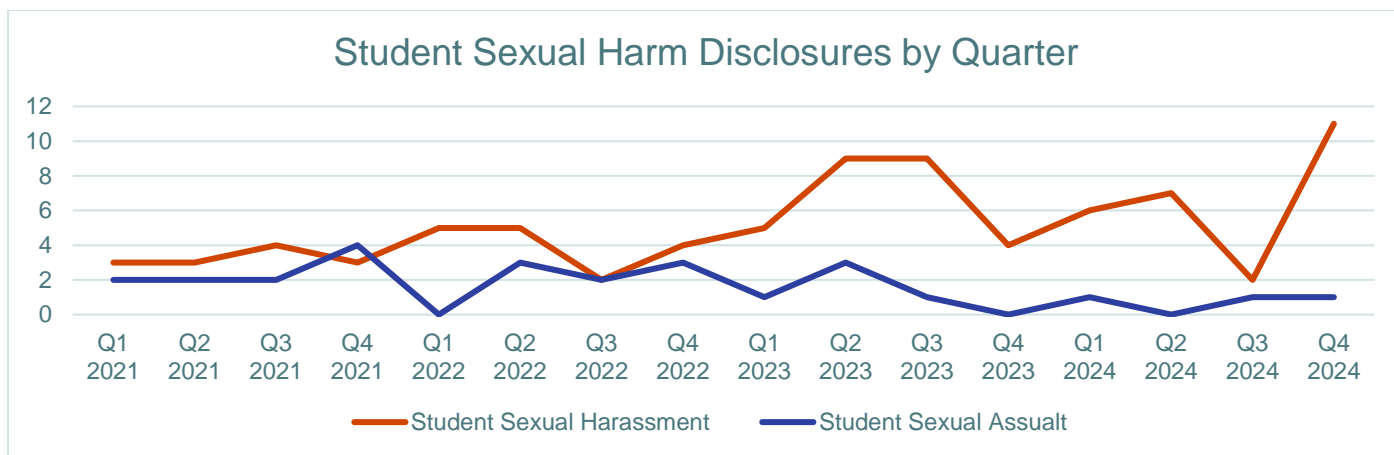
6 Sexual Harm Reporting Data

This section provides a detailed overview of the sexual harm incidents reported at our university since 2021 up to end Q3 2024. By sharing this data, we aim to highlight the prevalence of sexual harm, the effectiveness of our response mechanisms, and our ongoing efforts to create a safer and more respectful environment for all members of our community. The data presented includes the types of incidents reported, the demographics of those involved, the

outcomes of investigations, and the support services provided. This information is crucial for understanding the scope of the issue and for informing our strategies to prevent and respond to sexual harm.

Note: In this data, students who are also staff members are captured in the student data only. This is to avoid double counting. The incidents themselves also highlight that it is the peer relationship between students, or the power imbalance between a student and staff member that appear to be a driver the incident and therefore, most appropriate that the data is captured this way for the report.

6.1 Disclosures

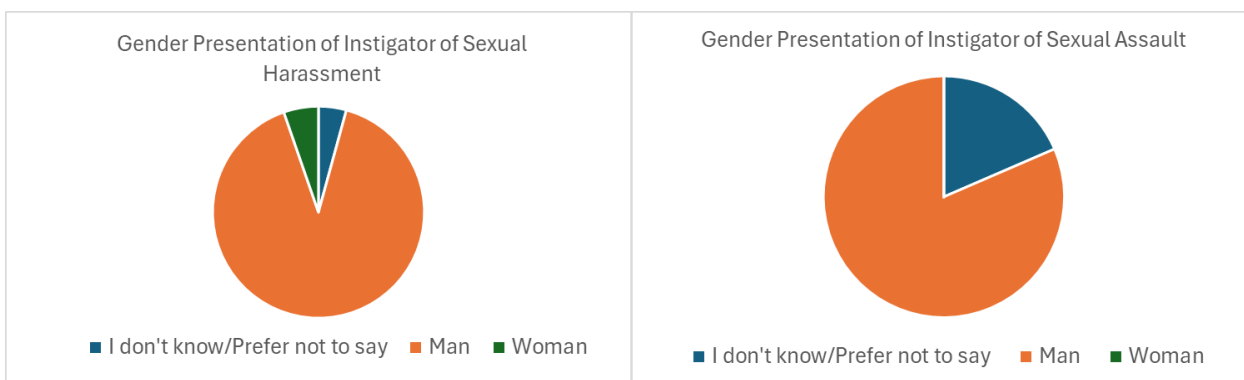
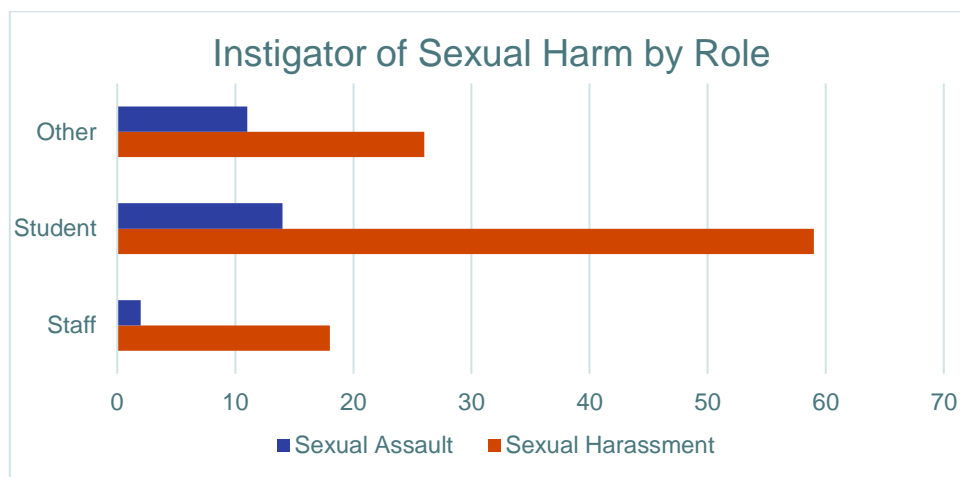


Disclosures of sexual harm have a degree of consistency with spikes in disclosures in April most likely related to students becoming aware of disclosure/reporting options following awareness raising activities tied to Orientation/Welcome back initiatives. Past reviews of disclosure/reporting trends align with periods of campaigns to raise awareness of expected behaviours and disclosure processes. Spike in reports for Q4 2024 relate to 2 students being reported multiple times, one for the same incidents and the other for several different incidents. The University is currently in the process of responding to these.

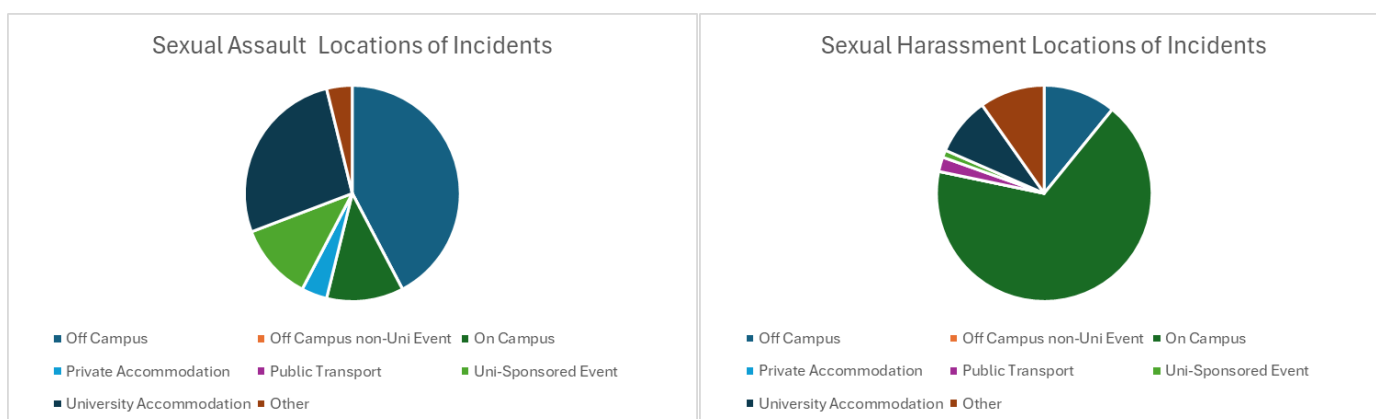
The overall growth in disclosures would indicate a cumulative effect of messaging and awareness raising initiatives.

Disclosures from staff follow similar trends to that of the student disclosures, indicating that student facing initiatives influence staff awareness. It is worth noting that no disclosures of sexual assault have been made by staff members.

6.2 Instigator Demographics



As per broader higher education sexual harm data, students make up most of the instigators of sexual harm behaviours, with 17% being staff members. Where staff were named as instigators, 60% of disclosers were students. Furthermore, the disclosures to Murdoch University reinforce that sexual harm is a gendered issue, with 88% of all incidents having an identified male presenting instigator, with a further 7.5% being listed as 'don't know/prefer not to say' which have mostly been submitted as anonymous disclosures.

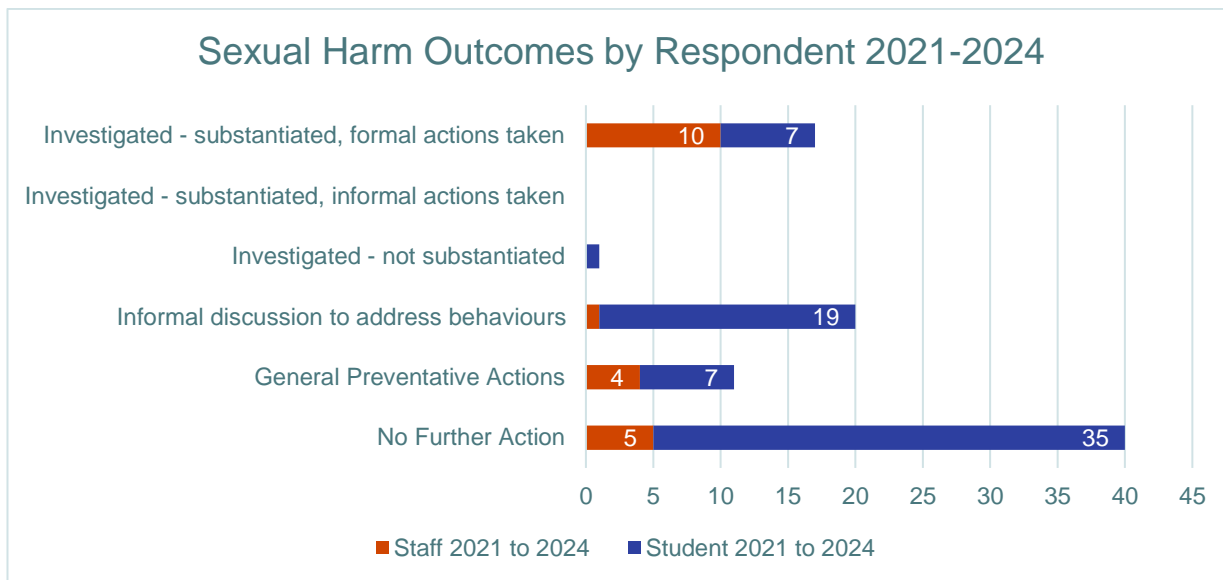


Most incidents of sexual harassment have been reported as occurring on campus. These are mainly in the more public areas of campus such as car parks, open spaces and the library. There are also several incidents that occur in classrooms. This aligns with the most common experiences of sexual harassment disclosures being staring, leering, following, and inappropriate/unwanted comments. However, there have been a growing incidence of concurrent or secondary occurrences through digital/social media.

Sexual assaults are more likely to occur in off campus locations. Of the 3 on campus incidents, two were not able to be substantiated and related to non-University people, one of which was referred to WA Police for further

investigation. The third related to a staff member, which was able to be substantiated and resulted in formal actions being taken to prevent future occurrences.

6.3 Outcomes of Disclosures



In the above data the No Further Action relates to formal or informal steps by the University. The majority of these are from people who are either anonymous or who have requested only to receive support for themselves. All named disclosers are contacted and offered follow up by a Sexual Harm Support Officer who can assist in referral to appropriate counselling support.

All disclosures received are used to inform current and future initiatives, where general preventative actions are recorded, these are actions taken specific to the disclosure. For example, following reports from a specific School in the University, training was arranged for all staff to raise awareness about respectful behaviours and responding to disclosures, and additional awareness raising assets (posters, leaflets) were made available in student areas.

To date the behavioural expectations meetings ([see Sect. 7.1](#)) have had a positive effect, with only one person being reported as continuing with the behaviours after the meeting. This repeat of behaviour resulted in a suspension from study for a teaching period.

Since 2021, of the disclosures that have been formally investigated, only one incident has not been substantiated, outcomes of these have ranged from formal warnings through to 2 staff members leaving their employment and 2 students being excluded from university grounds to maintain the safety of the University Community.

6.4 2024 Disclosure summary



The incidence of disclosures and reporting in 2024 has not varied greatly from previous years. Male presenting people remain the primary instigators of sexual harm (93%), with the most common issue faced is that of inappropriate comments and staring at others. Where outcomes have been applied, there have been no further incidents reported in relation to the respondents. Of the reported sexual assaults, one resulted in formal actions being taken by the University, two students were supported to make police reports, and one resulted in a behavioural expectation meeting at the request of the discloser for safety/wellbeing reasons.

7 Case Management and Response

The Sexual Harm Review Panel (SHRP) at Murdoch University plays a crucial role in reviewing all formal reports and any disclosures identified as high risk. The panel is an advisory group that ensures a thorough and trauma-informed response to incidents of sexual harm. Overall, the SHRP plays a vital role in ensuring that Murdoch University responds effectively and compassionately to incidents of sexual harm, upholding the university's commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all members of its community.

The SHRP reviews all formal reports of sexual harm and any disclosures that are identified as high risk. This ensures that each case is managed with the appropriate level of attention and care. The panel process intends to ensure that people with relevant specialised knowledge enable the Chair to make informed decisions relating to actions and outcomes of reports.

The composition of the SHRP depends on the nature of the complaint and the individuals involved. For example, if the complaint involves a student, the panel includes the Director of Student Library Services (as Chair), the University Secretary, and the Director of Access, Wellbeing & Equity (AW&E). If the complaint involves a staff member, the Chair role is moved to the Chief People Officer. The Chair then able to request further attendees where specific skills/knowledge is required.

The SHRP is responsible for making informed decisions based on risk assessments conducted by Sexual Harm Support Officers (SHSOs) and other relevant staff. This includes determining the necessary next steps and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to address the incident.

The SHRP ensures that all actions and decisions are guided by trauma-informed principles. This means prioritising the wellbeing and safety of the discloser and minimising re-traumatisation throughout the process. This also applies to the members of the Panel, with a process that minimises the level and depth of detail shared to prevent vicarious trauma.

7.1 Focus on educative outcomes

To ensure that responses support behavioural change as well as directly addressing behaviours, there are several approaches that have been implemented

- Previously students have been requested to write a short paper about the impacts sexual harm, however due to the potential use of Artificial Intelligence, a new approach has been taken in 2024. As a trial, a male student was given an article about the role men can play in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. The student, rather than writing a paper, was asked to review and attend a meeting to discuss the content of the paper, how it might align to their chosen career, and steps they could take to prevent sexual harm occurring in their future workplaces.
- Behavioural expectations meetings have also been utilised to enable an educative element. Students meet with a staff member to discuss the reported behaviour with a lens on the potential impacts on the person who experienced it. Where the respondent is male, the meetings are held with at least one male member of staff, who discusses wider issues of gender inequity and gender-based violence to provide context of impact of the reported behaviour.
- Staff involved in sexual harm issues, whether as a respondent or in situations where their actions have contributed to harm, are often required to engage in targeted training, counselling, or other educative measures as part of the resolution process. These interventions aim to address behaviours or gaps in understanding that may have contributed to the issue, fostering accountability and ensuring a safe and respectful workplace. By focusing on education and personal development, such measures seek to prevent recurrence and promote a culture of awareness, respect, and inclusivity in alignment with the University's values and policies.

8 Continuous Improvement and Policy Development

Murdoch University has undertaken an internal review of sexual harm policies, procedures and actions. The review was aligned to the Respect@Work legislation, Safe Work Australia guidance, and the information from Department of Education relating to Gender Based Violence in Higher Education.

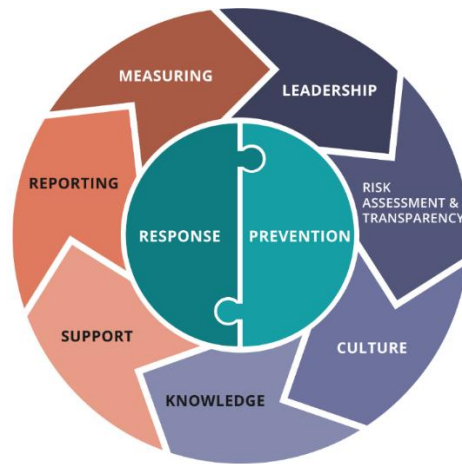
The outcomes from this review will act as benchmark for action planning upon the release of the pending National Code for Prevention of Gender Based Violence in Higher Education. This will drive future preventative actions but also offer updates to the current reporting and response processes.

The PVC EDI is leading a whole of University group to review current complaints and grievance processes to ensure that they align with guidance, legislation, and trauma informed principles. This work will consider findings of the internal review of sexual harm and is expected to be completed by mid-2025 with an action plan to address any highlighted shortfalls in current processes.

The University is committed to developing a responsive plan to respond to the findings of the above reviews to further reduce incidents of sexual harm and better respond to both those who experience it, and those who instigate it.

8.1 Gap analysis summary

The gap analysis engaged a range of key stakeholder to measure Murdoch University's performance against several legislative frameworks and identified gaps in their current practices, utilising the seven standards outlined as good practice indicators, shown in the diagram below.



Respect@Work good practice indicators for response and prevention of workplace sexual harm

Key findings include:

1. **Accountable Governance and Leadership:** Internal governance and accountability for preventing and responding to sexual harassment can be improved with more oversight from senior leadership and Senate
2. **Risk Assessment and Transparency:** The university lacks a systematic risk assessment approach for identifying and managing sexual harassment risks. There is no central source to capture these factors, making it difficult to manage risks effectively.
3. **Culture, Policies, and Practices:** While the university is progressing against targets for gender equity and diversity, there is a need for more explicit reporting. Furthermore, there is scope to enhance management of personal relationships between staff and between staff and students to prevent potential sexual harm.
4. **Education and Training:** Whilst there is training provided; it is not currently mandated. There needs to be a review of resourcing and training delivery to meet the requirement of all students and staff undertaking the required education. The review should also consider mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of training provided on sexual harm and harassment including outcomes of improved understanding and/or behaviour change.
5. **Support Services:** The university provides internal support for staff and students affected by sexual harassment, but there is a need for broader promotion and training in trauma-informed practices for responding staff. With the expansion of focus from sexual harm to all forms of gender-based violence, the support mechanisms should be reviewed for capacity to meet the need in a timely and responsive manner.
6. **Reporting:** Multiple options exist for reporting gender-based violence, but this may also create gaps in reporting due to uncertainty of where to report.
7. **Data Collection and Reporting:** There is a need for a robust and transparent data collection and reporting framework to support sexual harassment prevention and response efforts.

The report recommends using the findings to inform the work of the Grievance Process and Gender Based Violence working groups in developing an action plan based on good practice indicators and legislative guidance.

9 External Partnerships and Collaboration

Murdoch University actively collaborates with external partners in relation to sexual harm prevention and response initiatives. By working closely with partners such as Campus Living Villages (CLV) and participating in multi-institutional projects, the university leverages collective expertise and resources to foster safer and more respectful communities through expanded provision of initiatives.

- Murdoch University works closely with Campus Living Villages (CLV), who manage the on-campus student accommodation. The Access, Wellbeing and Equity (AW&E) teams work with CLV staff to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harm. University awareness raising assets are provided to the CLV to promote reporting and respectful behaviours, furthermore, when incidents occur, a collaborative approach is taken to support the person who experienced the harm and to respond to the person who instigated the unwanted behaviour(s).
The CLV manager has regular meetings with AW&E staff as well as having a direct line to the Director AW&E for support when incidents occur. Furthermore, there is a twice yearly CLV Advisory Board meeting which includes a summary of all incidents, including sexual harm, and actions taken.
- WA RNA – Murdoch University is an active member of the Western Australia Respect.Now.Always committee, which has representatives from each of the WA Universities. This group meets quarterly to discuss university initiatives on sexual harm prevention and response and shares relevant resources. Additionally, this committee worked together to deliver the previously mentioned “Respect Week” initiative in semester 1.
- The Access, Wellbeing & Equity teams also collaborate with the University Guild to run awareness raising campaigns related to healthy relationships and consent
 - Murdoch University Guild hosts an event titled “Sexual Wellbeing Week” in Semester 2 each year, which the University Wellbeing teams support by offering sexual health and consent related workshops. The collaboration goals are to deliver fun and engaging content that promotes healthy relationships and attitudes towards sexual health, and help to co-promote offerings.
- Murdoch University hosted a variety of external sexual health organisations on campus during events such as Respect Week, Sexual Wellbeing Week, and Sexual Assault Awareness month at both the South Street and Mandurah campuses such as: Allied Health for Wellness, Allambee counselling, Sexual Health Quarters, LUMA (previous Women’s Health and Family Services), Young Women Against Sexual Violence, and Safe Woman Safe Family.
- Murdoch University was a contributing member to the [Universities Australia Primary Prevention of Sexual Harm in the University Sector Good Practice Guide](#). Working in a multi-institutional team, AW&E staff help write and develop the guidelines relating to student voice and student co-design. Alongside supporting Sector best practice, this collaboration also led to other partnerships. This has included shared content for Respect week activities to maximise availability of awareness and prevention activities in Semester One 2024.

10 Summary and Next Steps

This report has highlighted progress in enhancing sexual harm prevention and response efforts at Murdoch University. Over the past year, the university has facilitated training programs, improved awareness of reporting mechanisms, and strengthened support services to ensure the safety and support of all community members.

However, the report also acknowledges the recognition of gaps and the need for further work to align with the forthcoming National Code for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education. The university is committed to addressing the full findings of the internal review and gap analysis.

Murdoch University reaffirms its unwavering commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all members of its community. By continuously improving policies, procedures, and support systems, the university aims to foster a culture of safety, respect, and inclusion.