

Report to St John's College on Cultural Renewal

November 2017

Contents

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project purpose

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

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

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

The Project has been undertaken at the request of five Colleges, including St John's College and its Council, and the University of Sydney. Both the College and the University recognise the importance of institutional cultural reform as a catalyst for the development of skills, knowledge and values necessary for students to thrive in a rapidly changing world. In conducting the work, the Project Team acknowledges the strong support of the Rector, the staff and student leaders, who have been critical to the success of the Project. This leadership group ensured strong levels of engagement in the cultural renewal process.

In this report, the Project Team sets out its understanding of the prevailing cultural life of St John's. In doing so, the Project Team recognises the recent cultural changes that have occurred and commend these. The Project Team has formulated a series of recommendations that build on these recent changes ensuring that participation in this Project benefits not only current students, but those who will reside at St John's College in the future.

The Project has been conducted at an important time for Australian tertiary institutions, as universities and colleges across the country are focusing efforts on ensuring the safety, respect and well-being of students. This Project represents one of the first in Australia to examine and respond to these issues specifically in the context of university residential colleges. To that end, St John's College, the four other independent Colleges and the University of Sydney are leaders in this area and it is hoped that this report and the associated recommendations will serve as a blueprint for other colleges in Australia and abroad, to strengthen and evolve their culture.

1.2 Project approach

1.2.1 General

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

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

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

1.2.2 Specific to the St John's College

In summary:

- In total, the Project Team spoke to 126 students and recent alumni. Eight discussion groups were held with St John's students, with 96 students participating in 2017 across First, Second and Third years, student leaders, Sub-Deans, Resident Assistants and Corridor Representatives, and St John's College representatives from the student intercollege committee. The Project Team also held one-on-one interviews with 25 students and 5 recent alumni.
- A total of 182 St John's College students participated in the Survey, attracting a 71% response rate (on par with the 69% response rate across the five residential Colleges).

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

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

¹ It is important to note that the Survey is not comparable with results reported in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report, where the sample of students tested and the questions posed were different.

1.3 Background and context

1.3.1 Life at St John's College

St John's is a co-educational College with a strong history, founded in the Catholic faith. The College has been nurturing and supporting students for 160 years. For its first 140 years, the College was all male and produced many men who served their communities generously and with distinction. Women were first admitted in 2001 and similarly, have made valuable contributions to St John's and the College community. St John's boasts a vibrant and active community of students, many of whom combine their university studies with a range of extracurricular activities.

During the course of the Project, many current students and recent alumni spoke of their deep connectedness to the College, their pride in continuing a family tradition of attending St John's and of their many positive and rewarding College experiences. All were keen to have their voices heard in helping to shape the culture of the College. They were enthusiastic about describing their experience of College life, the strengths and challenges.

Gender: St John's is a co-educational College, in which 49% of students are women.

Geographic and other forms of diversity: Of St John's students, 42% are from regional or remote areas (42%), 20% are from the Sydney metropolitan area, 20% from interstate, and 5% are international students. Approximately 8% of Survey respondents identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual (including gay/lesbian/homosexual, bisexual, asexual and undecided/ not sure/questioning). Further, 10% of surveyed students identified as living with a disability that has lasted or is likely to last six months or more that has an impact on your day-to-day life. College records show that four students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Leadership: A three-tiered leadership model operates at St John's College: the Council, staff leaders (known to the students as 'Administration') and the student leaders. St John's College is headed by a Rector who is supported by a professional team. The House Committee, of which there are 13 members including the House President, is the organising arm of the Students' Club. All students are members of the Student Club. Elections of the House Executive and the House Committee are by secret ballot overseen by an independent person ('Returning Officer') who is nominated by the Rector.

While some positions require gender balance (e.g. male and female first year 'fresher' and second year 'sophomore' representatives), there is no such provision for the House President and other key leadership roles. Despite being a co-educational College, to date there have been very few women occupying these roles at St John's. Only one woman has been elected House President since women were first admitted to the College in 2001. For 2018, the House Executive will be led by three male students, including the House President. Student leadership, including gender diverse leadership teams, is explored later in this report.

Support for students: St John's College offers students a range of support and assistance to enhance and assist their personal development; academic achievements; College and University experience; and, for freshers particularly, their transition into adulthood. It has a strong tutorial program which students commented was of considerable value in assisting them with the academic demands of University:

The academic support at John's has really helped me in my uni subjects.

It's great that people here are doing the same subjects and courses or older students are ahead of you in this area, and so they can help you and you can bounce things off them.

Pastoral Care is provided through the Dean and the Student Pastoral Care Team, comprising the Sub-Deans (SDs), Resident Assistants (RAs) and Corridor Representatives (CRs), who act in the role of peer assistants. Through its Catholic foundation, students also have access to strong faith-based support.

The peer assistant model is one that exists in many colleges across Australia and overseas. It is considered effective because as students themselves, peer assistants can understand many of the issues which students are experiencing. However, some challenges were identified during the course of the Project which are explored further in this report.

Activities: St John's College offers students an extensive range of co-curricular activities, including a diversity of sporting, debating and performing arts competitions. The College attracts many talented students across each of these areas.

O Week: First years' initial experience of College life is through orientation week, or 'O Week'. At St John's College, O Week involves a number of team-building activities, as well as activities which orient students to the policies, values and systems of the College. This includes presentations on issues relating to academics and study, mental health, first aid, alcohol use, and sexual harassment and sexual assault. There have been a number of changes to O Week in recent years, including changes introduced in 2017, which are designed to enhance the inclusive nature of activities and events and minimise risk to students.

1.3.2 Previous changes and particular strengths

St John's College has instituted a number of changes to life at the College over the last few years, prior to the commencement of this Project and as recently as 2017. The Project Team commends the College on this progress and notes that a number of its recommendations build on these recent cultural change initiatives. These changes include:

- Greater accountability of students who engage in unacceptable behaviour.
- Stricter rules concerning activities in O Week, including reducing the number of days constituting O Week and requiring approval from the Rector for all student-run events.
- Prohibiting the use of Student Club Fees for the purchase of alcohol.
- Limiting the supply of alcohol to student events under a liquor licence.

In making such changes, St John's College has built on its considerable strengths. One of the key strengths of College life at St John's is the deep sense of belonging students have to the College. Good referral pathways are provided for students with mental health issues and St John's has some elements of best practice in its policies on harassment, vilification and victimisation, and in relation to excessive alcohol consumption.

1.3.3 Areas for strengthening

Areas of culture at St John's College requiring strengthening emerged from the qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered during the Project. These areas are not necessarily unique to St John's College but, if left unaddressed, will limit the College's ability to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students. Areas identified include:

- Ensuring the election of student leaders is democratic as well as transparent and rigorous. The process should ensure that those students with the best leadership qualities or potential are selected, rather than those who may be the most popular.
- Ensuring that female students are given tangible opportunities for leadership roles, both as a matter of fairness and equality but also because considerable research confirms that gender-diverse leadership teams in any organisation perform more effectively and have better outcomes than homogenous teams.
- Eliminating all negative aspects of student hierarchy and prohibiting any activities that may be construed as hazing or are demeaning.
- Eliminating negative aspects of a male-dominated culture, often attached to sporting codes, that can impact on the enjoyment of College by other students and in some cases, their well-being.
- Balancing student independence with the College's duty of care to students including minimising risk to students' health, well-being and safety, such as through the supply and management of alcohol.
- Maintaining a respectful and safe environment and when unacceptable behaviours occur, ensuring there is at all times, a safe reporting environment and a rigorous complaints handling and support system.
- Ensuring the better integration of St John's students into the broader University of Sydney community.

In relation to this last point, St John's students stated that they experienced marginalisation and, on occasion, hostility from the broader University of Sydney community. This is explored further in the report.

2. Principles and Findings

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

The following findings about St John's College are grouped under and take their lead from these principles.

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

Within St John's College, there are three tiers of leaders: the College Council, staff leaders and student leaders. It is critical that all three tiers visibly commit to the next phase of the cultural renewal journey, as they demonstrated when committing to involvement in the current Project.

A strong theme heard by the Project Team was that students felt supported by staff, peers and the student leadership team. 86% of St John's students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by my student leaders' (significantly higher when compared with 77% of surveyed students across the five residential Colleges). Further, 91% of St John's students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel supported by my peers and staff'. However, men were significantly more likely to agree with this statement (98% of men compared to 85% of women).

Students in discussion groups, one-on-one interviews and in their Survey responses spoke positively about their leaders and the 2017 House President:

The student leaders...are basically like, 'if anything happens, come to us immediately'. I think that's really important to know that.

In O Week, the three leaders were like, 'if you are a sexist, if you are racist, if you are homophobic...you have absolutely no right to be here. Get out if you're like that'...They were so adamant on that...particularly...[the President], he was so staunch on that.

While many aspects of the overall student leadership election model work well, a number of deficiencies in the election system were identified. For instance, a number of St John's College students felt that a pervasive male culture within the College means that women are less likely to attain leadership roles compared to the male students. This is evidenced by the very few female students holding leadership positions since the College became co-educational.² Further, all key senior leadership roles in 2018 will be held by male students, as they were in 2017. Students commented:

² In the last five years (2013-2017), only one woman has been elected to one of the 15 House Executive positions. Since women were admitted to St John's College 17 years ago, only one woman has been elected to the position of House President.

I was disappointed that no women were elected [this year]. I think [the House Executive] are fantastic – they really are deserving of their roles – but we should also be promoting diversity and trying to make sure that the leaders reflect the students, meaning both guys and girls.

I never thought about it until [the election for 2018 leaders]. The fact no women were elected although there was a really strong woman running made me realise it's the culture here that means that women will never be in the senior leadership roles, the roles with influence.

I have heard guys say that women shouldn't be on House Com and the House Exec. When freshers see that the leaders are all male and are always male, the girls will never put their hand up to run as they don't feel they will ever be chosen.

Why can't there be a male and a female student House President, sharing the role together? We have a number of positions where there are both male and females in roles, so why not this one?

Given that 49% of students are women, the Project Team believes that St John's should strengthen efforts to ensure that the student leadership reflects the co-educational nature of the College and that it reflects the breadth of talent of both male and female students. A 40:40:20 model is one that a number of organisations have adopted to ensure that there is good gender balance at leadership levels. The basis of this model is that 40% of leaders are men, 40% are women and 20% are either gender. This model, known as a 'gender-neutral target', allows for gender diversity and allows for a diversity of views and thought – a key element for good leadership and decision-making. Further, the Project Team suggests various strategies to ensure the role of House President rotates on an equitable basis between male and female students or that there be a male and female sharing the House President role together. This model ensures that both male and female students will have the opportunity to compete equally for leadership roles. Without a diverse leadership group, the College runs the risk of not accessing the best talent for leadership roles. It is important to recognise that such a model is not inconsistent with merit. As stated in a letter co-signed by the organisation, Chief Executive Women, and the coalition, Male Champions of Change:

adhering to an un-interrogated idea of merit means there is no examination of biases, and it reinforces the idea that gender inequality is about supply side problems rather than demand. So organisations miss out on the best talent and are fishing in an ever smaller pool of candidates. A pool that fails to reflect the community our organisations serve. If we continue to define 'merit' as people 'like us' who have done what we did, we will get more of the same.³

2.1 Best practice student leadership

Best practice recognises that student leadership is integral, not supplementary, to the successful operations of educational institutions. Developed specifically for university student leadership, the 'social change model' sees all people as potential leaders and leadership as involving collaborative relationships which lead to collective action. This suggests that 'a conscious focus on values should be at the core of any leadership development effort'.⁴ Best practice affirms the importance of leadership development programs, as well as transparent and rigorous selection processes.⁵

The selection processes need to ensure that candidates share and emulate the values of the St John's community, including respect and inclusion. Formal role descriptions should be developed together with clear criteria for selection that candidates must address. Student leaders also benefit from ongoing support via mentoring, team-building exercises and feedback. Implementing these strategies at St John's will strengthen the College's selection process so that those students, both male and female, with the best leadership qualities and potential, not merely the most popular, are the most likely to be elected each year.

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

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

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

2.2 Sub-Deans, Resident Assistants and Corridor Representatives

St John's College has a strong model for peer assistance in its Student Pastoral Care Team, comprising Sub-Deans (SDs), Resident Assistants (RAs) and Corridor Representatives (CRs). This model is similar to others that exist in many residential college settings in Australia and overseas. Student pastoral care and support has been the subject of considerable research and review, with RAs themselves being described as the 'eyes and ears' of the institution. RAs simultaneously fulfil the roles of a student, role model, counsellor, teacher and administrator.⁶ Further, the occasionally serious issues to which RAs frequently respond, including mental health concerns, alcohol-related issues and sexual assault have been described by some observers as a role 'more akin to that of a professional's or first responder's.'⁷

Echoing concerns expressed in peer-reviewed literature, the Project Team was concerned by the level of responsibility borne by many SDs, RAs and CRs including the impact of this responsibility on those students themselves, as well as their capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to sometimes complex issues. The Project Team notes that SDs, RAs and CRs are provided with guidance on when to escalate serious matters to staff. However, it is also suggested that they be provided with additional ongoing support to debrief on issues that might distress them. This is a critical measure to minimise any risk of vicarious trauma.

2.3 Student hierarchy

Student hierarchies (beyond formal leadership roles) are a common feature across many residential colleges and generally involve seniority and power increasing as people progress through year levels. These hierarchies are understood as cultivating respect for those with experience but on occasion can include conventions which may seem unusual or outdated to outsiders, including requiring first years to sit only with their year group in the dining hall. While there is much collegiality at St John's, there still exists a hierarchy between years. This hierarchy is generally established during O Week.

The student hierarchy was a feature of many of the discussions with students and through commentary in the Survey. The Survey revealed that 7% of St John's students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'student leaders have too much power' (a significantly higher number of women agreed with the statement (12%) compared to men (2%)). The results are on par with the responses across the five residential Colleges with the same pattern across all five residential Colleges observed.

Students also stated:

Freshers need to know that we have the maturity and experience that they don't have. So, yeah, it is important that they respect us and see us with authority.

I think there needs to be some segregation of the first years. They are more likely to bond with each other. I also think they need to respect the older students who have more experience.

However, a smaller number of students commented:

[The hierarchy] makes you feel unequal.

One thing I really don't like about College is the hierarchy between first years, second years and third years... I just want to hang out and get to know some second and third year students but you really can't. You have to sit with the fresher group because they'll hiss at you and stupid things like that.

Student hierarchies which are not a part of the proper and accountable student leadership system can undermine the inclusiveness of the College and can, for some students, be detrimental. Unchecked, a negative hierarchy can result at best, in inequality between individuals and, at worst, in abuses of power. Further, poor practices emanating from hierarchies are contradictory to principles of good and ethical leadership.

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

7 *ibid.*, p. 24.

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

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

2.4 Belonging

A strong and consistent theme was the sense of belonging and inclusion felt by many students at St John's College. The Survey revealed that 90% of surveyed students at St John's agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel a sense of belonging' and a further 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they 'get involved in activities and social events organised by St John's College' (on par with surveyed students across the five residential Colleges). This strong sense of belonging also featured in many of the discussions with St John's College students, in discussion groups and individual interviews:

It feels like a community here and the diversity of students has made settling in easy. I have loved every minute here. It is an amazing community of people.

St John's has helped me thrive as a young adult and has always given me support.

Relevant literature confirms that belonging is vital to a positive student experience. However, research also notes that college students can feel pressure to 'fit in' to the prevailing environment.⁸ The Survey showed that 4% of St John's students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I don't fit in at St John's' (on par with the experience of students across the five Colleges). Asked why they do not feel they 'fit in', the most common reasons given were due to being different or having different interests; the drinking culture or binge drinking; their cultural background or racism or their socioeconomic background. A further 7% of St John's students stated that they had experienced 'being excluded or isolated' since starting at St John's (significantly less than the 13% of students across the five residential Colleges).

Students commented:

I think there is a certain persona in College that you have to bring. You have to be outgoing, talkative and be able to go out of your way to make friends. For people like me, who are not necessarily like that, it can be hard.

If you don't know people when you come to College, like if you are not part of particular Sydney schools who all know each other, it can be isolating and hard to make friends.

2.4.1 Diversity and fitting in

Diversity within the College allows students to gain different perspectives and expand their knowledge as they learn about the different experiences of others.

The majority of St John's students are domestic students from regional or remote areas (42%); 20% are from the Sydney metropolitan area; 20% from interstate; and 5% are international students. Approximately 8% of Survey respondents identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual (including gay/lesbian/homosexual, bisexual, asexual and undecided/not sure/questioning). Further, 10% of surveyed students identified as living with a disability that has lasted or is likely to last six months or more that has an impact on your day-to-day life. College records show that four students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

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

Of St John's College students surveyed, 5% reported experiencing some form of 'intolerance of diversity' (on par with the results across the five residential Colleges).⁹ A further 13% of St John's surveyed students reported that they had witnessed or observed intolerance of diversity, with 7% stating this was directed at a fellow resident of St John's; 5% directed at a fellow resident of St John's or a resident of another College; and 3% directed at a resident of another College.¹⁰ These findings were on par with the results across the five residential Colleges. Female students commented that despite the College being co-educational, there was a sense of inequality with the male students:

There is an embedded inequality in St John's between boys and girls. It is very much male-dominated and there are big differences between how boys and girls are treated.

[St John's] may look like a girls and boys' College, but it's really a boys' College that girls just go to.

2.4.2 'Hooking up' and fitting in

Of St John's students surveyed, 4% reported that they felt like they should have sex in order to fit in or be accepted compared with a significantly higher proportion (9%) across the five residential Colleges. While significantly less than the average across Colleges, it nevertheless arose as an issue in discussion forums and one-on-one interviews with St John's students. Some female students shared with the Project Team that 'hooking up' with other St John's students or students from other Colleges was an important element of 'fitting in':

I would say, yes, there is a sort of pressure to get with someone.

Hooking up is part of our age group, but there's a bigger pressure I guess to hook up with another College person when you are living here.

2.4.3 Alcohol and fitting in

Access to alcohol and its excessive consumption is a common feature across colleges in Australia and overseas. Though students rightly noted that alcohol as a social lubricant is a significant feature of broader Australian life, a wide body of literature confirms that excessive and potentially harmful consumption of alcohol is a much more substantial feature of student life, including among college students.¹¹

Almost half (47%) of the St John's students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'drinking alcohol helps me socialise and make friends' (on par with the findings across the five residential Colleges). Undergraduate freshers were significantly more likely to report this, with 56% of undergraduate freshers reporting this compared to 39% of undergraduate students who are in their second year or higher at St John's.

9 Intolerance of diversity included behaviours such as 'racist slurs directed at you'; 'homophobic slurs directed at you'; and 'pressure to hide or deny your sexual orientation and/or gender identity to fit in or be accepted'.

10 Students could select more than one category, so the individual categories may add up to more than the total.

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

While students did not necessarily feel a pressure to drink, a clear theme was that drinking was critical to finding one's 'place' at College, particularly for first years:

Outliers or non-drinkers are obvious and are heavily scrutinised.

I don't drink and at times it is ostracising.

2.5 Relationship with the broader University of Sydney community

Students across the five Colleges spoke of a sense of marginalisation – and, on occasion, victimisation – by other students or staff from the broader University community.

Of St John's students surveyed, 57% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel stigmatised by University of Sydney students and staff because I go to College' (on par with the results across the five residential Colleges). Women at St John's were significantly more likely to report this than men (68% of women compared with 44% men), as were students in second year at College or higher (75% compared to 29% of freshers).

The poor treatment was exacerbated following negative media reports about university colleges more broadly. Students also spoke of being perceived as victims when reports of incidents are made public:

A female University of Sydney student verbally attacked me and called me a misogynist pig when she saw my St John's water bottle.

The worst times I've had as a College student are when other uni students treat me in a certain way if I say I'm from College. The College makes me feel...secure, the uni makes me feel like I shouldn't go to College. Other students sometimes hate us, and I have had people I was friendly with turn their backs on me when they find out I go to College. This attitude only makes the Colleges more insular.

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

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

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

2.6 O Week

A key strength of St John's College is the range of extracurricular activities available for students which enables them to explore new opportunities and to develop new friendships. This includes during O Week, with a strong theme throughout the Project being students positive and enjoyable experience of the week:

I thought I would be homesick, but O Week was so much fun and I got to meet so many people, that I actually forgot about missing home.

I loved it. We really all came together. And at the intercol events we all came together as a family.

O Week was one of the best weeks of my life. I made more friends in O Week than I did in years 11 and 12. I came out of O Week feeling like I had a solid family within this dynamic.

The Project Team supports the College's efforts over the last few years to ensure that O Week is safe and inclusive for all students. One student stated:

I think everyone's sort of aware that sometimes O Weeks are pretty hectic, and I think it's a testament to [student leaders] that everyone had a good time this year, and they introduced some more events that didn't necessarily involve as much drinking, and I think those were some of the 'funner' ones.

However, a so-called 'big drinking culture' and an indirect pressure to participate in activities as a way of fitting in, emerged as a theme during the Project:

I was really shocked at the amount of drinking at O Week.

There was so much alcohol during O Week. I wasn't expecting it I guess and there were so many people getting drunk.

The Project Team has made recommendations about reforms to O Week across the Colleges which include an emphasis on harm minimisation. It commends St John's College for the changes to O Week this year.

Best practice suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' model for student orientation. Rather, programs should be tailored to the students and the institution, and should consider the social and academic needs of the students; the mission and goals of the institution; and how best to integrate the students in light of these.¹² The recommendations of the Project Team reflect these priorities, as well as build on initiatives already underway at St John's College.

2.7 The place of alcohol at St John's College

In addition to a licensed bar at St John's College that runs events several times a semester, students have access to bars at other University of Sydney Colleges. Like other College students, St John's College students can also consume alcohol in their rooms. A focus on drinking at College is not unique to St John's College; however, students commented:

There is a definite drinking culture here. It's pretty much a big part of being at College.

I don't attend many of the heavy drinking orientated events... I don't go because there is a focus solely on getting really drunk which is something I have no desire to ever do.

As noted above, 13% of surveyed students agreed or strongly agreed that there is 'too much focus on drinking at St John's College' (on par with the results across the five residential Colleges). Further, the Survey revealed that 6% of St John's students surveyed had experienced pressure to drink alcohol when they didn't want to since starting at College (significantly less than the experience of students across the five residential Colleges (13%)). Further, 14% reported that they had witnessed or observed other students being pressured to drink when they did not want to and 2% reported witnessing or observing students being pressured to take drugs when they did not want to (significantly less than the experience of students across the five residential Colleges (30% and 5% respectively)).¹³

Excessive alcohol consumption can put students at risk of harm to themselves (e.g. alcohol-related injury) or harm to others (e.g. sexual assault or other assault). Students themselves commented that excessive consumption of alcohol heightened the risk of sexual assault or harassment.

Given that opportunities for alcohol consumption at St John's College are frequent (as they are across other Colleges), the Project Team has made recommendations for a common and broad-ranging harm-minimisation approach. This includes reforms to the way in which alcohol demand and supply is managed and made available to the student body.

¹² HigherEdJobs n.d. 'New Student Programs: A Look Inside Orientation, Transition and Retention Programs', Interview with Dr. Cynthia L. Hernandez of Texas A&M University, Accessed 7 Nov 2017, <https://www.higheredjobs.com/HigherEdCareers/interviews.cfm?ID=402>.

¹³ Of these, the majority witnessed this pressure coming from another St John's student. Further, of the 14% of students that reported they had witnessed or observed pressure to drink alcohol or take drugs, 7% reported this was directed at a fellow St John's student; 6% reported it was directed at a St John's student and a student from another University of Sydney residential College; and 2% reported it was directed at a student of a different University of Sydney residential College.

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

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

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

When asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'I do not always feel safe at St John's College', 7% of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (on par with the experience of students across the five residential Colleges). Those students were asked why they did not always feel safe, and the main reasons cited included the culture of binge drinking and violent, aggressive or intimidating behaviour.

Some students told the Project Team that they felt unsafe or uncomfortable around certain groups of male students, particularly when those students were intoxicated. Often those students were associated with sporting codes. Students, male and female, stated:

There is overt masculinity that's in your face. It can be uncomfortable. Fresher boys want to impress the older boys so they degrade the girls.

The boys can be rough and violent when drunk. Although they see it as playful and just between each other, it can hurt others/damage property and its intimidating. Hearing them come down your corridor when they're drunk is scary and you can feel too afraid to leave your room and go to the bathroom in case they start picking on you.

Some of the girls are so vulnerable, particularly when the boys are really drunk. And some of the boys are huge.

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

2.8 Bullying and 'hazing'

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

...any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.¹⁴

Notably, willingness to participate or the giving of consent does not mean that an activity is not deemed to be hazing. Common characteristics of hazing include power differentials based on hierarchy and social dominance between freshers and more senior students; and intentional initiation rites usually based upon College-specific traditions and rituals.¹⁵ In many instances, alcohol and other substance abuse is a common feature of hazing.¹⁶

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

15 *ibid.*

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

The Project Team recognises that hazing can be subject to a number of different interpretations by students, some of whom consider it to be ‘fun’ and not dangerous or demeaning and believe that participation is optional. This view was supported by a number of students who stated:

Hazing is actually fun.

I have seen instances of hazing but it is never forced. Leaders will only select students that they know would be willing to participate in the acts. It never involves intimidation. The participants seem more than willing to take part and I am sure they would never be forced or intimidated if they decided they didn't want to do it at the time.

However, a number of practices were brought to the Project Team's attention by students who felt certain practices were humiliating and made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Students commented:

Hazing definitely happens. And not everyone feels ok with it.

[I was] pressured into humiliating acts that also involved alcohol. It happened a few years ago but I felt utterly humiliated.

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

The benchmark definition for bullying, meanwhile, is that proposed by Olweus¹⁷ who pioneered work in bullying among school students. He suggested a student is being bullied when the individual:

*...is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.
...An additional criterion of bullying is an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship).¹⁸*

Of St John's students surveyed, 15% reported experiencing ‘bullying or intimidation’, ‘hazing’ or ‘pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students’ since commencing at St John's College (on par with the experience of surveyed students across the other residential colleges).¹⁹ Women were significantly more likely than men to report this behaviour (23%) compared to men (6%). These findings are also on par with the experiences of students across the five residential Colleges.

Of St John's students surveyed, 9% reported experiencing ‘exclusion or isolation’ or ‘malicious rumours directed at them’ since commencing at St John's (significantly lower when compared with 16% across the five residential Colleges).²⁰ Women were significantly more likely to experience this behaviour with 14% of women, compared to 3% of men, reporting they have experienced this since commencing at St John's College (similar to findings across the five residential Colleges).

Of St John's College students surveyed, 17% reported that they have witnessed or observed ‘exclusion or isolation’ or ‘malicious rumours’ directed at another St John's College student. A further 10% reported that they have witnessed or observed ‘exclusion’ or ‘malicious rumours’ directed at a St John's College student and a student from another College.²¹

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

18 *ibid.*

19 Of these students, 10% reported experiencing ‘hazing’, 8% reported experiencing ‘pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating or intimidating to you or other students’ and 3% reported experiencing ‘bullying or intimidation’.

20 Of these students, 7% reported experiencing ‘exclusion or isolation’ and 5% reported experiencing ‘malicious or hurtful rumours directed at you’.

21 A further 6% had witnessed or observed this behaviour directed at a resident of a different University of Sydney residential College.

The Project Team notes the importance of bystanders in responding to and preventing bullying, intimidation and hazing. Indeed, the survey revealed 38% of St John's students surveyed had witnessed or observed 'bullying or intimidation', 'pressure to participate in activities that were humiliating to them or others' or 'hazing' with the majority directed at a St John's College student.²²

2.8.1 Best practice responses to hazing

Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom have established best practice standards on the management and prevention of hazing and other orientation rituals that can cause harm to students. Allan and Madden's 2008 *National Study of Student Hazing* is the most comprehensive survey to date of hazing at US tertiary institutions.²³

These include:

- Drinking games, including to the point of getting sick or blackout.
- Chanting songs publicly and out of context.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Being shouted at and/or called names by senior students.
- Games designed to humiliate participants or outsiders to the group.²⁴

Four key themes to combat hazing and promote student safety emerge from the evidence:²⁵

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

Hazing prevention policies need to be implemented carefully and with student involvement to avoid backlash. St John's College has already demonstrated its willingness to work with students by involving them substantively in its cultural renewal project.

2.9 Sexual misconduct

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

22 Of the 38% of St John's students who reported that they had witnessed or observed these behaviours: 17% witnessed or observed these behaviours directed at another St John's College resident; 20% witnessed or observed these behaviours directed at another St John's resident and the resident of another University of Sydney College; and 9% witnessing or observing these behaviours directed at a student from another University of Sydney College. Note, students could select more than one category, so individual categories may add up to more than the total.

23 Allan, EJ & Madden, M 2008, 'Hazing in View: College Students at Risk', *National Study of Student Hazing*, March 11, p. 36.

24 *ibid.*, p. 18.

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

While sexual misconduct emerged as a theme at St John's, no disclosure by a student of sexual assault was made to the Project Team in discussion groups or one-on-one interviews. Nevertheless, students were keen to share their views on the issue, as well as on sexual harassment. Of St John's students surveyed, 5% reported experiencing sexist remarks directed at them (significantly less than students surveyed across the five residential Colleges (10%)). Further, 4% of St John's students reported feeling like they should have sex in order to fit in (again, significantly lower than students across the five residential Colleges (9%)).

2.9.1 Sexual harassment and sexual assault

The Survey results reveal that a significantly higher proportion of St John's women surveyed (20%) experienced sexual harassment²⁶ compared to St John's men (3%) (on par with results across the five residential Colleges).

Of those that reported that they had experienced sexual harassment, the vast majority occurred at St John's residence or grounds. In the majority of incidences, fellow students of St John's were engaged in the behaviours. The majority of the incidents involved males only, while a small number involved both males and females.²⁷

For women, the most common forms of sexual harassment included 'unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing' (7%); 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended' (6%); 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure, or inappropriate display of the body' (4%); 'intrusive questions about private life or physical appearance that made you feel offended' (4%); 'inappropriate physical contact' (4%); and 'requests or pressure for sex, or other sexual acts' (4%).

For men, the most common forms of sexual harassment experienced included 'sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of body' (2%); 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended' (2%); and 'sexually explicit pictures, posters or gifts that made you feel offended' (2%).

The Survey also revealed that 27% of St John's students surveyed have witnessed or observed sexual harassment since commencing at St John's (significantly less than the 41% of students across all five residential Colleges).²⁸

Students commented to the Project Team:

I was slapped on the arse by a male member of the College. It was unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature and I told him as much. I can recognise this was a relatively minor incident. However, I believe that Colleges in general should put more of a focus on empowering young women to be proud of and in control of their sexuality, and to not be demonised or ridiculed for it...

[I feel uncomfortable by the] pressure to have sex if boys are really drunk and pressuring.

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

27 In nearly all cases reported by St John's women, the incident involved males only, while a small number involved both males and females. Of the three cases reported by male St John's students, one involved a male only, and the other two involved males and females.

28 Of the St John's students that reported they have witnessed or observed sexual harassment: 18% reported that the subject of the sexual harassment was another St John's College resident; 13% reported that the subjects included a St John's resident and a resident of another College; and 2% reported it was the resident of another College. Note, students could select more than one category, so individual categories may add up to more than the total.

The Survey revealed that 3% of women at St John's reported experiencing actual or attempted sexual assault since starting at the College (no men reported experiencing this).²⁹ This is on par with the proportion of women reporting this across the five residential Colleges. A further 2% of surveyed students reported that they had witnessed or observed 'actual or attempted sexual assault' (significantly lower than the results across the five residential Colleges).

It is important to note that this data is not comparable with results reported in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report, nor with other national prevalence data surveys, such as those administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics where different questions and sample groups were used. Nevertheless, the Commission commented in its report that:

- Alcohol was often identified as a factor that contributed to people's experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment.
- The Commission received a number of submissions that reported sexual assault while the person being assaulted was unconscious or severely impaired due to the influence of alcohol.
- A particularly large number of submissions identified alcohol as a factor contributing to sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurred in university residential accommodation.³⁰

2.9.2 St John's College's policy response to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct

St John's College's harassment policy and procedures are found in the Student Code of Conduct which is published in the Student Handbook.³¹ As noted above, the policy statement clearly enunciates the College's zero tolerance towards harassment, vilification and victimisation.³² The policy has several features which the Project Team considers to be examples of best practice. The policy includes clear definitions of harassment; sexual harassment; bullying; stalking; and victimisation, along with examples of actions which could constitute harassment and be in breach of the Code. It also provides details of steps which students can take should they wish to report harassment.

While the strong zero-tolerance policy statement against harassment is commendable, the Project Team believes there needs to be a similar policy of zero-tolerance towards hazing and sexual assault. The Project Team suggests St John's include specific definitions of hazing and of sexual assault, as well as clear outlines of reporting and support mechanisms so that students can be better informed.

29 Sexual assault was defined in the Survey as: 'Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced, coerced, tricked or intimidated into sexual acts against their will or without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. It also includes any attempts to force, coerce, trick or intimidate a person into sexual acts against their will or without their consent. Sexual assault can also occur if you are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs and therefore unable to consent.' One of the three incidents involved a fellow St John's College student and two of the three incidents took place during the academic year (excluding O week). The students who reported experiencing sexual assault chose not to provide further details (they opted for 'prefer not to say'). No St John's men reported experiencing actual or attempted sexual assault.

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

31 St John's College 2016, 'SJC Student Code of Conduct', *Student Handbook*, pp. 55–58.

32 *ibid.*, p. 56.

2.9.3 Best practice for combatting sexual misconduct

Best practice standards for preventing and managing sexual misconduct have been established by international and Australian studies.³³ Five key principles emerge:

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

2.10 Disclosure and reporting

Of the 22 reports of sexual harassment, half of the students sought support, mainly from another College resident (who is not a staff member). No student formally reported the incident, with the main barriers to reporting being the student not thinking that it was serious enough; thinking that they could sort it out for themselves; and not thinking that they needed help. Of the three students who reported experiencing actual or attempted sexual assault, none of them made a formal complaint.

Highlighting the potential for bystander responses and interventions, of St John's students who reported witnessing or observing sexual harassment, 36% stated that they took action as a result (on par with students surveyed across the five residential Colleges). Of those students, 24% talked to the target of the behaviour; 10% talked to the offender; and 8% spoke to a student in a position of responsibility for the welfare of students (SDs, RAs or CRs).³⁴

Research on disclosure and reporting practices of college students identifies that students are generally cautious about telling someone, particularly someone in authority, if they have experienced unacceptable behaviour.³⁵ This is especially the case when that behaviour is sexual misconduct. These findings are consistent with the findings of the Survey of St John's College students and with the insights presented in discussion forums and one-on-one interviews.

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

34 Students could select more than one category, so individual categories may add up to more than the total.

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

A theme emerging from the discussions with students was their confidence in the reporting system at St John's College. Many students stated that they were confident about disclosing and reporting an incident and that they would be comfortable approaching the Dean or a member of the Student Pastoral Care Team:

I would definitely go to my RA. I know she would be supportive.

Other students were uncertain about whether the issue would remain confidential, or if reporting could have a negative impact on their peer and friendship group, including friends from other Colleges:

I'd probably have no friends if I reported against someone in a group I was in.

I honestly don't know if I would report something because I've had friends who've been sexually harassed ...[and] I tried to put myself in their shoes. I genuinely wouldn't know what to do, because it's wrong, and therefore there should be consequences, but at the same time as soon as you... tell someone else, or bring it up to a higher level...you might be stigmatised even.

These comments suggest that opportunities exist for more proactive approaches to be taken and a safer reporting environment to be created within St John's College. A safe reporting environment is one that meets the following three elements:

- The organisation has a zero tolerance to unacceptable behaviour, including sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- Complainants will not be victimised.
- The matter will be expeditiously investigated and where appropriate, action will be taken.

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

Most St John's students who spoke to the Project Team were not aware of the University complaints system or counselling service.

3. Conclusion

St John's College is an impressive and influential institution, one that has provided a strong intellectual, cultural and spiritual environment to students for over 150 years. The St John's community has much of which it should be proud, including the commitment of its Rector, staff and student leaders; the involvement of its student body in rich and diverse extracurricular activities and; its academic achievements. With the admission of women into the College in 2001, St John's has further enriched and strengthened its community. Although a relatively new addition to the College, female students have made significant contributions to St John's College life.

Reflecting on and renewing culture in any organisation is critical if that organisation is to evolve and remain relevant. St John's College is aware of the significance of evolving culture as evidenced by the changes it has made in recent years to ensure the community is more inclusive for all.

Traditions and conventions exist at St John's some of which continue to underpin a strong culture, but others which are inconsistent with the College values and, if not addressed, will undermine the positive changes already made. Attitudes and behaviours may also endure in some quarters which will limit St John's ability to reach its full potential for the community it serves.

The Project Team has made a number of recommendations which it believes will ensure St John's continues to be a positive, rewarding and importantly, respectful and inclusive environment for all. The suggested reforms are designed to lay the foundations for future success.

While all areas for action identified in the recommendations are critical areas for reform, the Project Team particularly notes the few areas where St John's women have significantly different experiences to their male counterparts, including their sense of feeling supported by staff and peers, and their experiences of sexual harassment. In addition, the Project Team notes the low representation of women in key student leadership positions. The Project Team urges St John's College to take further steps to address any residual impact of its previous 'all-male' College status, and ensure women's contribution to St John's is recognised and their safety is ensured.

The Project Team firmly believes that St John's College will continue on a strong path of cultural renewal. In doing so, it will build upon its considerable strengths and will position itself as a leader for University college life, creating an environment in which students can thrive.

4. Recommendations

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

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

The Project Team recognises that a number of recommendations have already been progressed to varying degrees by St John's College and the other Colleges. It commends St John's College and the other Colleges for taking proactive action in advance of the report. Where there has already been progress by a College in line with a particular recommendation, this progress is acknowledged in the individual College's report.

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

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

Leaders set the tone of organisations.

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

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

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

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

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

Leadership of the reform process

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

Student leadership

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

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

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

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

Staff leadership

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Orientation

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

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

Alcohol

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix A: Survey methodology and interpreting results

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

A total of 182 St John's students (over the age of 18 years) participated in the Survey. Students were emailed an invitation to take part and received up to two reminders during the course of fieldwork. All St John's students were invited to take part (n=257). Student details were passed onto the Social Research Centre from St John's for the purpose of the research. Students who took part were provided with a \$10 e-voucher as an acknowledgement of the time taken to complete the Survey. The Survey took, on average, 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The Survey attracted a 71% response rate¹ (on par with the 69% across the five residential Colleges).

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

The Survey provided an alternative avenue for St John's students to engage with the project and confidentially report on their views and experiences. The findings are reflected throughout this report.

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

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

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

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

Interpreting the results

The table below presents margins of error associated with various survey estimates. These take into account both the achieved response rate (71%) and population of St John's students (n=281). This table should be used to assist with the interpretation of results. For example, if 50% of St John's students agree with a statement, we can be 95% confident that the true estimate is between 46% and 54%.

Survey estimate	Associated margin of error, at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$)	
	St John's College	All Colleges
50%	+/- 4.3%	+/- 1.7%
40%/60%	+/- 4.3%	+/- 1.7%
30%/70%	+/- 3.9%	+/- 1.6%
20%/80%	+/- 3.4%	+/- 1.4%
10%/90%	+/- 2.6%	+/- 1.1%
5%/95%	+/- 1.9%	+/- 0.8%

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

