



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

within the University of Sydney

# Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

for

St John's College

within the University of Sydney

*Prepared Under Section 7 of the*

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

1 January 2026

# 1. Executive Summary

Standard 7 of the National Higher Education Code sets out requirements to ensure that St John's College, as a residential college within the University of Sydney, provides a safe environment supported by clear, trauma-informed processes for the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence. As a fully residential college, St John's College has direct responsibility for compliance with this Standard.

The Standard requires St John's College to maintain clear reporting and disclosure pathways, provide access to appropriate support services, ensure staff and student leaders are appropriately trained, and respond to disclosures in a person-centred, trauma-informed manner. It also requires ongoing monitoring, reporting, and review to support continuous improvement; obligations the College undertakes willingly, fully embraces, and meets in accordance with its legislative responsibilities.

St John's College has strong existing pastoral care and governance frameworks that provide a solid foundation for compliance with Standard 7. Current work is focused on aligning College policies and practices with the University of Sydney's Sexual Harm and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy, effective 1 January 2026, and ensuring that residential-specific processes are clearly communicated to students.

Ongoing oversight by the Rector, College staff, and the College Council provides assurance that St John's College continues to meet its obligations under the National Code and maintains a safe, well-supported residential community.

This Whole-of-Organisation Assessment has been prepared under Standard 7 of the National Code.

The Australian Business Number (ABN) for St John's College, University of Sydney (registered as The Rector and Fellows of St John's College) is 77 142 270 315. This entity is listed on the Australian Business Register with that ABN and operates as the College within the University of Sydney.

## 2.Introduction

The College of Saint John the Evangelist ("St John's College") was founded on 1 July 1858 with the proclamation of *the St John's College Act* in the Parliament of New South Wales.

Its founder, Archbishop Polding, named it after the author of the fourth Gospel. The symbol of the College is therefore the eagle, the traditional symbol of St John.

The modern St John's College within the University of Sydney is an academic community founded in the tradition of Catholic commitment to university education, and within the broader context and tradition of University Colleges. The College is located adjacent to the University of Sydney campus in Camperdown and only accepts enrolments from students at the University of Sydney. At any one time, it has roughly 270 resident students and a varying number of affiliated, non-residential students.

The College is governed pursuant to the *St John's College Act 2018*, with a Council of 12 members, both appointed and elected, together with the Rector, who is the CEO of the College. The Rector is assisted by a Vice-Rector, Dean of Students, Director of Operations and Registrar, as well as a wide variety of other staff.

### **Mission**

St John's College is a Catholic university college which enables young men and women to immerse themselves in university life through:

- a welcoming residential environment for students from different backgrounds;
- an experience of community living with social, sporting, religious and cultural opportunities;

- assistance to foster academic achievement;
- an opportunity to engage with the Catholic faith and its intellectual tradition;
- supportive pastoral care;
- formation in leadership through service to others.

## **Vision**

Students will leave the College:

- ready to embrace life's challenges,
- having made life-long friends,
- as committed and engaged St John's alumni, and
- wanting to contribute to the Catholic and broader communities.

## **Culture**

St John's culture is committed to:

- participation of all St John's students in the communal life of the College;
- high academic standards, critical and open inquiry, intellectual rigour;
- the compatibility of intellectual inquiry with the Christian Gospel;
- high standards of ethical behaviour and social responsibility;
- service to those less advantaged;
- respect, honesty and charity.

## This Plan

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

- condoning of violence against women
- rigid gender stereotypes
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

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

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

St John's College is committed to reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence and providing a safe environment for our residents, staff and visitors.

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

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

The College has had a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Sydney in relation to issues relating to gender-based violence since 2024. This has been updated with a legally-binding agreement, containing the relevant obligations prescribed by the Code, in late 2025.

### 3. Area of Operation: Leadership, Culture & Environment

The College has an existing staff and student leadership structure. The staff leadership is headed by the Rector, who is accountable to the College Council. Relevantly below the Rector include the Vice-Rector, the Dean of Students, Senior Tutor, Academic Residential Deans, the Registrar and the Senior Resident Assistants, as well as a variety of stipendiary staff. Beneath the Senior Resident Assistants sit Resident Assistants and Corridor Representatives.

The student leadership structure consists of the elected House Presidents (one Male and one Female), House Secretary and House Treasurer (together, the "House Executive") who are in turn supported by an elected House Committee. In the past several years, the House Committee has tended to be majority female.

#### **Sources of information**

This assessment has been informed by past cultural reviews, including the *Broderick Review* of 2017, the 5-year Broderick review Survey of 2022, and the ongoing work arising out of its findings, discussions with staff leadership and with students, including student leadership.

## Leadership, Culture & Environment

### Enablers

- *The College has a highly cohesive staff-student leadership model, built on trust and mutual respect. Students understand that the very highest standards are expected, in return for which they can expect a safe, rewarding, inclusive and enjoyable Collegiate experience.*
- *The College, being a small and close-knit community, can intervene early in any incipient problems, and a diverse network of Resident Assistants and Corridor Representatives provides insight and understanding into the complete College community. Students are often more comfortable opening up to the peers, which is a further benefit of the Resident Assistant network.*
- *The Rector and senior staff are highly accessible to students and the wider community, providing a further avenue for students to raise concerns. The College has a number of staff who are trained to respond quickly, appropriately and sensitively to instances of gender-based violence.*
- *All students receive mandatory training in Welcome Week about gender-based violence and respect for others, including bystander training. Student leaders and anyone involved in pastoral responsibilities receive extensive annual training, and guest speakers to the College often address these issues.*
- *The College has extensive mechanisms to support diversity and inclusion, including a variety of Committees and initiatives.*

### Systemic risks

- *The College student population is completely turned over every three years. Therefore, there is a constant need for vigilance as to student culture. "Traditions" may become falsely and harmfully embedded very quickly, even if they start out as supportive events.*
- *The College's population is aged 17-22 at a given time. The College therefore needs to remain aware that students have come from a variety of schools, with differing exposures to co-residential environments, differing values and levels of training. Particularly in the first few weeks at College, these distinctions can be acute.*
- *The Broderick Review (2017-2018) identified shortcomings in the College culture, and these are constantly being addressed.*

### Barriers

- *Turnover of residents may present challenges in maintaining positive culture.*
- *Staff do not have a perfect ability to foresee and intervene in whatever might happen.*

Key actions in  
response

- The College continues to engage constantly with its student leaders and population generally to ensure that its culture supports human flourishing. Extensive staff and student training continues to occur as does proactive monitoring of events and happenings on the College site, or involving College students.
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## 4. Area of Operation: Structures, Norms and Practices

The College has a strong set of values and sense of mission, aligned with Catholic social teaching and its goal to be a top-tier academic community in Australia.

### **Sources of information**

This assessment has been informed by past cultural reviews, including the *Broderick Review* of 2017, the 5-year Brodercik review Survey of 2022, and the ongoing work arising out of its findings, discussions with staff leadership and with students, including student leadership.

## Structures, Norms and Practices

### Enablers

- The College has a strong set of values, driven by its Catholic identity. This manifests in a strong culture of caring for those in our community, as well as a deep commitment to social justice in the wider community. This is particularly acute given the College's location near the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, as well as the community in Redfern.
- The College's pastoral care structures are detailed elsewhere, but are both deep and broad, and demonstrably effective in articulating and maintaining high cultural standards.
- Safety and wellbeing is the key focus of Welcome Week for new students, and the College's Leadership Week for student leaders. It is also discussed frequently throughout the year.
- The College has a wide variety of programs and structures to ensure inclusivity, including various Committees, and enforces gender balance across both pastoral care and student leadership positions, thereby ensuring that a multiplicity of voices are always heard.
- The College's leaders strive to model respectful behaviours at all times.

### Systemic risks

- The College is conscious of the negative aspects of its history and acknowledges that the work of cultural renewal is ongoing. This process must be constant and comprehensive.
- The College has a zero-tolerance policy for hazing or any other form of degrading practice. The College takes a prevention-first approach, and actively investigates any matters that are brought to its attention, noting that there has been a history of such events at College.
- The College has a wide variety of avenues to bring matters to its attention in order to minimise any chilling effect of hierarchy.

### Barriers

- The College student population is comprised solely of young people aged 17-22, and there is accordingly risk associated with poor decision-making by adolescents, even when well-intentioned.
- The College has complete student turnover every three years, such that cultural practices can become embedded quickly and sporadically, meaning that constant vigilance is required.

## Structures, Norms and Practices

Key actions in response

- *The College continues to monitor all student events and student life very closely. Perhaps more importantly, the College continues to actively articulate why harmful practices are unwelcome and not in anybody's best interests, thereby encouraging students to choose more positive paths for themselves. When such choices are not made, the College responds accordingly.*
  - *The College pastoral care system was recently reviewed and a limited number of changes were made to better support the community as a whole. Student surveys consistently rank the pastoral care system as one of the best functioning and most valued aspects of College life.*
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## 5. Area of Operation: Systems & Infrastructure

The College's systems and infrastructure are developed and advanced. Internally, the College has access to experienced HR-type investigators, who are able to respond by gathering information quickly. The Rector is a doctor with extensive experience in women's health, and is thereby able to provide specialist assistance with a variety of issues involving gender-based violence. As the Rector lives onsite, after-hours escalation can involve directly contacting the Rector.

Further, the College provides access on a needs-basis to two trained counsellors to assist students in navigating difficult issues, including (although certainly not limited to) gender-based issues. Where required, the College will engage outside consultants to assist. Importantly, the College has a relationship with the University (pre-dating the introduction of this Code) which allows for the College to refer matters for investigation to the University. This allows the College to access the University's extensive resources and expertise, while also minimising re-traumatisation.

Reports to College can be made anonymously, or to any staff member (including Resident Assistants). All such people have been trained. Records are retained in the College's secure documents system which is only accessible by relevant staff. Significant measures are in place to support anonymity and confidentiality.

### **Sources of information**

Current policies and staff structure; review of existent network infrastructure.

## Systems & Infrastructure

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| Enablers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The College has an on-duty Resident Assistant at all times, who must remain on-site and an on-call Senior Resident Assistant. The College Rector lives on site and is available by phone call at any time. The College from time to time has other available staff living on-site too.</li><li>• The availability of College counsellors is of great significance to the College's pastoral care offering. The in-house expertise with HR, policy, and investigations is also a significant asset.</li><li>• The College has extensive CCTV networks. In turn, these are securely held to prevent abuse.</li><li>• All students have locking doors on their rooms, and the College itself is not accessible to outsiders without an access key.</li></ul> |
| Systemic risks          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The College can never be 100% certain that a system, however well-designed, will not be abused. However, staff members who are also students (such as Resident Assistants) are not given access to CCTV, secure document storage, or any part of the College's digital infrastructure. These are left in the hands of full-time staff, who are in turn are the subject of strict obligations.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Barriers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are difficulties in balancing physical privacy with CCTV. For this reason, all students are reminded often that the College has CCTV for their safety.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Key actions in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The College continues to monitor its systems to determine whether they sufficiently meet best-practice obligations.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## 6.Area of Operation: Service Delivery

The College is a complete residential community in the Oxford-Cambridge sense. It comprises accommodation, meals (including Formal Dinners), tutorial offerings, pastoral care including counselling services by trained psychiatry doctors, religious practice, sporting and cultural pursuits, career support, a College Bar, other events and a variety of other matters. It is a traditional community offering.

### **Sources of information**

Review of existing services offered and *2025 College Student Handbook*

## Service Delivery

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| Enablers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The College has a highly attuned and developed sense of community and students generally take real pride in it. This means that negative behaviour is more easily identified and addressed.</i></li><li><i>Having the community on-site makes for more straightforward and clear messaging.</i></li><li><i>Regular contact with all residents allows for easier exchange of information and concerns.</i></li></ul>                                                                                |
| Systemic risks          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The College Bar and other events involving alcohol are a systemic risk to College, as is any event where alcohol is involved. The College invests significant resource in ensuring these environments are safe, including by requiring staff not to drink at such events.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Barriers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The College is limited by resource and time in its ability to engage fully with every resident.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Key actions in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Every student at College, for some time, has an assigned Resident Assistant or Corridor Representative. The College expects those staff members to make clear where there is an issue with an individual student.</li><li>The College continues to closely consider the extent and nature of alcohol provision on-site. All decisions in this respect are taken by senior staff with risk management expertise to ensure that students are given the chance to grow responsibly and safely.</li></ul> |

## 7.Area of Operation: Policies and Procedures

The College has adopted the University of Sydney's policies in this respect, including the Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025. The College continues to develop and review its own policies (which have been in existence for some time) in respect of Formal Reports and Disclosures, and maintains its own policy in respect of handling Disclosures which the Discloser wishes to keep within the College.

More generally, the College has a Student Code of Conduct, The General Regulation, a Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment Policy and a Student Complaints Procedure. It also has a Privacy Policy.

### **Sources of information**

Existing College policies and Agreement with the University of Sydney.

## Policies & Procedures

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|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enablers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The College policy framework is extensive, well-developed and well-understood. It provides flexibility when required.</i></li><li>• <i>College agreements for residence require adherence to College policies as they may exist from time to time.</i></li><li>• <i>College policies are appropriate to deal with intersectional issues, as well as issues of gender-based violence that interact with other forms of misconduct.</i></li><li>• <i>The College culture focusses on addressing these issues as ones involving dignity, as opposed to merely disciplinary, as part of its focus and mission.</i></li></ul> |
| Systemic risks          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>College policies are not a panacea and must be accompanied by prevention and action. Over-focus on policy can be counter-productive.</i></li><li>• <i>New staff may take time to come up to speed on College policies and approaches.</i></li><li>• <i>While generally beneficial, the College's tightly focussed staff structure can mean that aspects of the decision making process must be done by a single individual.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Barriers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Policies take significant time to amend and the more amendments are made, the less they are understood.</i></li><li>• <i>The College's formal framework, with a governing Act and by-laws, can mean changes are not able to be made quickly.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Key actions in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The College continues to review its policies, including to ensure compliance with the Code, and anticipates a new set of policies being issued in 2026.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## 8. Area of Operation: Management & Governance

This is largely addressed above. The College has a College Council constituted by an Act of Parliament and is fortunate to have a dedicated group of people with a wide variety of skills in various roles. These include members of the judiciary and academics (University approved member).

The College's management is led by the Rector and includes the staff members outlined above.

### **Sources of information**

See *St John's College Act 2018* and the College staff structure.

## Management & Governance

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enablers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College management have all had extensive training and experience in dealing with gender-based violence.</li><li>• Council members and College management are diverse, being from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Attention is given to gender diversity in making new appointments.</li><li>• The College is committed to a zero-tolerance policy of gender-based violence, and this forms part of the motivation for continuing cultural renewal.</li><li>• The College undertakes frequent surveys of its students to review the prevalence of gender-based violence.</li></ul> |
| Systemic risks          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The College Council is alive to gender-based violence as an institutional risk to the College and prioritises it accordingly within its governance function.</li><li>• Resources are allocated annually and as required to support prevention and elimination of gender-based violence.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Barriers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is limited control, particularly by the College Council but also College management, of gender-based violence, given it can be ad hoc. This is especially so in a community comprised of 17–22-year-olds. However, the College is committed to setting a culture where that risk is minimised to as low as possible.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Key actions in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The College continues to ensure gender diversity among its appointments to governance and management. Skill in the area of gender-based violence is noted as being a relevant factor in such appointments.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## 9. Area of Operation: Community Engagement

The College alumni and community positively support inclusive behaviour at College, including through talks at College and mentorship of individual students.

The College has been able to secure a number of leading Australian women to speak at College to model female leadership and excellence.

The University of Sydney is also highly supportive of the College's efforts in this respect.

### **Sources of information**

Review of existing programs and plans.

## Community Engagement

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enablers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The University of Sydney provides extensive support to College in respect of culture-setting and reducing gender-based violence.</i></li><li><i>Alumni provide mentorship and talks to current students to support gender equity and positive role modelling.</i></li><li><i>The College is committed to ensuring that guest speakers at College reflect the diverse success of modern Australia and has been able to secure a number of leading Australian women to speak at College.</i></li></ul> |
| Systemic risks          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Students who arrive at College come from a variety of backgrounds and families. It is not always straightforward to ensure they live up to the College's expectations where expectations from their schools or local communities may be different.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Barriers                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>N/A.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Key actions in response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The College continues to consider further ways to engage its broader community on these issues.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |