

MEDIA RELEASE

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Addressing sexual harassment and assault at Australian Universities

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) today released a report on the results of a national survey investigating the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault at universities. The survey was undertaken in partnership with Universities Australia (UA) as part of the Respect, Now, Always campaign.

University of Wollongong (UOW) students were encouraged to take part in the survey. UOW has now released the report on its individual results.

Illawarra Forum commends UA on undertaking this world first research into sexual harassment and assault. 'While the results are alarming,' said Nicky Sloan, Illawarra Forum CEO, 'the release of the report shines a spotlight on these issues which are damaging and impactful not only in the university environment, but across the whole of community.'

So much was unknown about the scale of the issue and this report will at least provide a benchmark which will enable Universities to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns to reduce sexual harassment and assault.

'The University has reached out to the community services sector and we look forward to working with them to raise awareness of sexual assault and harassment and to reduce them across the University and the whole region,' said Ms Sloan.

'We are pleased to note that the University of Wollongong has implemented measures to address key issues such as gaining consent and bystander behaviour, to improve campus security and ensure the respectful treatment of students who have suffered sexual harassment or assault,' the Illawarra Forum CEO said.

The Illawarra Forum are conscious that this report and the resulting news coverage may trigger an issue or re-traumatise victims within our region.

If the release of the report has raised concerns for anyone we encourage them to contact University of Wollongong services for students:

- Counselling Services, Phone 4221 3445.
- Sexual assault and Sexual Harassment Support Service, Phone 1300 303 455.

Or seek specialist advice.

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About the Illawarra Forum

The Illawarra Forum is the peak body working for community services and organisations in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice. The Illawarra Forum is an independent organisation governed by a committee of management elected annually by the membership.

The Forum represents the non-government community services industry in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, which consists of approximately 300 organisations. The Illawarra Forum works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region.

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