Recommendations and ANU response

BACKGROUND

An audit of counselling services for students who have experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment was completed by Kandie Allen-Kelly and Andrea Strachan in August 2018 in accordance with recommendation 7 of Change the Course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian Universities (2017). The report is tabled. ANU management supports 7 of 13 of the recommendations, and notes that its view of an integrated network of needs-based support for students who have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment explains its support for a revised response to the other recommendations.

PREAMBLE

ANU is committed to building and sustaining an integrated mental health ecosystem. The number of young people needing support has grown dramatically, and that support—if it is to be responsive to individual needs—has to be provided through a range of options. Students may seek out help on campus via, for example, ANU Counselling, Access and Inclusion, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Dean of Students, medical practitioners, students and staff with leadership roles in the halls of residence and in teaching activities. The services of locum counsellors are also provided during peak times—which coincide with exams—in May and November each year.

Students, and we, ought to expect that support will be ready to hand, that the support offered is integrated in order to avoid sending students from service to service without gaining help, that feedback will be provided on those services, and that we will respond with performance expectations and the implementation of improvements in a timely manner.

It is in that context that ANU welcomes the findings of the audit of counselling for students who have experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment. As was acknowledged in the audit, ANU counselling provides an invaluable service, and the dedication of the staff deserves recognition. But they are struggling under the explosion in demand for services, and it is increasingly clear that the options for students who have experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment need to be signalled much more clearly, that there is no one size fits all model, and that resources need to freed up to respond to student needs in time and in a manner that will best help them.
It was in that context that ANU announced in 2018 a partnership with the National Health Coop (NHC), which will formally commence at the opening of the Kambri Precinct in January 2019. The aim of the partnership is to expand the provision of clinical resources for general mental health needs via the NHC so that ANU Counselling can be freed up to focus on supporting students who have experienced sexual assault or harassment, contribute to education that will build respectful relationship environments and support students in residences. This is highlighted in simple form in the boxes below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANU Counselling</strong></td>
<td>7.2FTE</td>
<td>Provides all counselling services to the ANU community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NHC</strong></td>
<td>1 FTE</td>
<td>Providing interim support for ANU counselling, for general mental health provision</td>
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Under the new arrangement, ANU will maintain its ANU Counselling service, and all staff—including the head—will remain ANU employees.

Getting to that model requires us to face two challenges:

- Ensuring that the service providers work together in a holistic fashion, to the benefit of students seeking support; and
- Providing adequate services ahead of the end of the 2018 academic year.

To achieve these two goals, the ANU will prioritise clarifying entry, supports and pathways for students who have experienced sexual assault or harassment with all of the following key providers involved:

- ANU Counselling;
- NHC;
- Dean of Students;
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre;
- Access and Inclusion; and
- Respectful Relationships Unit
This will involve consultation with students and with other relevant groups such as the residential leadership teams—including student senior residents—and the chaplaincy service. It will clarify:

- Information for students on who they can seek support from;
- Business processes that ensure that students are provided with appropriate supports;
- Agreed reporting formats and nomenclature (eg ‘serious’, ‘moderate’ incident) and targets for performance, and options for student and staff feedback on services and responses to that feedback.

Ahead of reaching that outcome by the end of January 2019, ANU will commit to increased funding of:

- 0.4 FTE for the CRCC for training; and
- 2 FTE for ANU Counselling for a period of 12 months to meet additional demand and to ensure that any increase in locum provision can be done within professional standards for supervision.

ANU undertakes to review performance against the above commitments by end March to see whether further staffing and activity adjustments are needed to ensure the achievement of the goal of an integrated mental health system.

It is with these prefatory comments that ANU Management presents its response to the audit of counselling services, dated August 2018.

**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

ANU management supports 7 of the 13 recommendations outlined in the audit, namely:

| Recommendation 3 Extend model of service delivery: | ANU to develop a specific dedicated therapy service which supports students who have been sexual assaulted and/or sexual harassed within its broader service model. |
| Recommendation 4 Improve access through span of hours’ changes: | ANU Counselling Centre to increase its span of hours with earlier starts, later finishes and staggered lunch breaks some days to better accommodate student needs. |
| Recommendation 5 Develop formal Triage system: | ANU Counselling Centre to develop a formal triage system delivered by a senior counsellor and transition to longer same day appointments. |
| Recommendation 7 Mandatory Training ANU Counselling Staff: | Mandatory Context training (including ANU processes, structures and roles, residential contexts, working with different cultural ethnic groups on campus) to be provided for all new ANU Counselling Centre Staff as well as developing and delivering ANU specific LGBTQI awareness/sensitivity training for professionals workshop to all clinical staff |
| Recommendation 8 Update ICT systems in ANU Counselling Centre: | Replace ICT system with an established, tested, proven and mature system that enables more efficient data recording and extraction as well as online booking as a matter of urgency and implement online bookings and interactive services. |
| Recommendation 9 Integration with other student support services: | CRCC should be co-located with ANU Counselling Centre for the duration of its contract with the ANU and A&I and NHC should be located in the same building or close by to develop and maintain good integration. |
| Recommendation 12: | After hours support for Residences: A dedicated after hours counsellor / critical incidence coordinator position should be a contracted to provide after- hours support to the residences. |
Three recommendations are supported with relatively minor revisions in approach.

**Recommendation 2** suggests the co-location of the Respectful Relationships Unit within the Kambri Medical and Health Building. This is not possible given that the building is fully leased and occupied by ANU Counselling, the National Health Coop and allied health providers of services such as physiotherapy and dentistry. The University is committed, however, to locating the Respectful Relationships Unit in proximity to the Kambri precinct, and at this stage it looks highly feasible that the current Access and Inclusion office in the Copland Building will suit the Unit’s needs.

**Recommendation 11** recommends an MOU between ANU and the ACT Crisis Assessment and Treatment (CATT) Team. ANU would be pleased to renew its MOU with the CATT team, but recommends doing so in concert with the College of Health and Medicine, under the leadership of the Dean.

**Recommendation 13** recommends the appointment of a project officer to manage outcomes from the audit. ANU management accepts that recommendation but suggests that a project manager be appointed to manage the outcomes of both the counselling audit and the residential review to ensure a coordinated approach. This is desirable given that it is expected that there will be overlapping recommendations across the two reports.

For **recommendations 1, 6 and 10**, the University’s response is explained by a different approach to that taken by the two reviewers.

ANU supports the provision of multiple, coordinated pathways by which students who have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment can receive support and assistance that is appropriate to their needs.

ANU has agreed to a partnership with the National Health Coop in which ANU Counselling will provide a primary focus for students who have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment, early stage mental health activities, support for the residences and responses to critical and serious incidents. The NHC will provide additional capacity in psychological services to support the mental health needs of the wider ANU population. By January 2019, the service will provide up to 6 additional clinical psychologists, in tune with demand. This will take ANU mental health services to 13.2 FTE—above the 11.6 FTE recommended in the audit—in additional to any locum services needed during periods of exceptionally heavy demand, such as exams.

Access to the non-therapeutic services of the CRCC—which is offered in partnership with ANUSA and which is subject to a yearly performance review—and to medical and health practitioners, to the Dean of Students and the Respectful Relations unit ensure that a broad range of student needs can be met.
A key activity that will be completed by January 2019—in accordance with recommendation 1—is the mapping and communication of clear pathways designed to provide appropriate, just in time support for students who have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment.

ANU management would have been pleased to explain the above approach if the senior executive member responsible for the delivery of counselling services—the DVCA—had been invited to participate in the audit. Minus that input, and that of the NHC—who were not invited to participate—and the CRCC—who declined to participate but whose views could have been sought via ANU management—then it is reasonable to conclude that the perspective expressed in the audit is incomplete.

Most importantly, however, ANU management is in strong agreement with the reviewers that ANU counselling provide an invaluable service that deserves the deep gratitude of the ANU community.

**CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION RECORD**

Respectful Relationships Steering Committee 6 September 2018

Senior Management Group 6 September 2018

University Executive 10 September 2018

ANU Audit and Risk Committee 19 September 2018

Council 5 October 2018