



University Colleges Australia

(The Association of Heads of Australian University Colleges and Halls)

In the 160th anniversary year of university residence in Australia, we affirm our commitment to the provision of safe and secure living and learning communities that are free from all forms of violence and intimidation, sexual assault, harassment and discrimination.

Leaders of university colleges, halls and other residences are at the forefront of working with our staff and students, university personnel, and with a range of relevant community agencies and resources to increase and update our awareness and knowledge, undertake training, develop programs and improve our responses to behavioural issues that not only challenge and confront us, but are also of challenge and concern in the wider community. Of course, we are very much 'front line' support 24/7 of, for example, the transition of young people from school to university, adolescence to adulthood, dependence to independence, and from home to a 'home away from home' – often from countries overseas as well as interstate.

Across Australia, college students are proactively engaged in charitable and community service events, often volunteering to raise awareness of and funds for mental health programs, the needs of those who are homeless, and educational opportunity for indigenous, isolated/remote students. They are engaged with alcohol and other drugs harm minimisation activities, as well as initiate and/or take part in mentoring programs for local and disadvantaged school students. Constant themes and presentations at professional conferences relate to the mental health and overall wellbeing of residents, appropriate responses to sexual assault and harassment, and to dealing with the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. UCA is actively supporting the *University Australia* campaign 'Respect Now. Always'; it is also currently forming a national Working Group on Alcohol Harm Minimisation.

There is no excuse for behaviour that demeans and diminishes others, and it should in no way be tolerated. In their promotion and support of "the intellectual, critical and scholarly values and habits that a great university inculcates"¹, collegiate residences, in often unheralded ways and in addition to providing accommodation, continue to add positive value to the university student experience through academic engagement and support; mentoring and care; sporting, social, cultural and spiritual activities and events; and through a variety of learning and leadership opportunities.

¹ The late Professor Alan Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor University of Melbourne 1996-2004, *The Challenge to Colleges* in 'Trinity Today', Trinity College, Melbourne University, Summer 1998/99, Number 56, pp 13 & 14