

13 September 2023

Senator Tony Sheldon  
Chair  
Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment  
E: [eec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eec.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator Sheldon

**Questions on Notice responses from Group of Eight Chief Executive, Vicki Thomson**

**Senate inquiry – Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023 [Provisions] – Public Hearing, 1 September 2023**

Please find attached the responses to the Questions on Notice directed to Vicki Thomson, Chief Executive of the Group of Eight (Go8).

The Chief Executive was asked to respond to several questions on notice during the proceedings of the hearing held on the 1 September. A list of additional requests was received from the Committee on 5 September. Both stipulated a very short turnaround time for responses. While the Go8 appreciates the need for the Committee to be able to make its recommendations in time for potential changes to the 2024 academic year, this created significant challenges in providing accurate answers to the level of detail requested.

The following information therefore reflects what it was possible to provide within the above limitations. We trust that it will help to inform the work of the Committee in making its determinations.

Yours sincerely,

**VICKI THOMSON**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## Questions on Notice Received during the Hearing on the 1 September 2023

### 1. Can you provide examples of student support mechanisms that Go8 members have in place?

**\*\*Note that these are a selection of support mechanisms in place – they are NOT a comprehensive list.**

#### The University of Adelaide

- **Succeed@Adelaide – identifying and supporting students with low-course engagement.**

The University of Adelaide's Succeed@Adelaide's proactive outreach program aims to boost student success by enhancing belonging, connectedness and agency via peer-to-peer phone calls. In 2022 a campaign was piloted to identify and assist students with low engagement. Using indicators like LMS login and assessment submission, the program reached 88 students in Semester 1 2022, with 74% eDM (electronic Direct Mail) open rate and 51% successful contact. 18 students received support to drop all load, while 1 reduced load. Semester 2 2022 extended to 206 domestic and international students, introducing no-submission alerts, garnering positive feedback from students and academics for immediate interventions (final outcomes are still being reviewed).

- **ATSI counselling support**

At the University of Adelaide, Counselling Support has successfully engaged a Specialist Aboriginal Counsellor in 2023 to work with First Nations students. Utilising community engagement and connection, as well as a cultural understanding given the Counsellor's own Aboriginal heritage, this specialist role was established to offer targeted and culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait (ATSI) students through the provision of drop in, counselling, case management and crisis response as needed. In collaboration with Wirritu Yarlur Support Services, our dedicated Indigenous student support unit, this initiative has ensured ATSI students have access to appropriate support where they are most comfortable and allows for collaborative work across all services required to ensure the success of University of Adelaide ATSI students. Since the commencement of this leading student support counselling initiative, the number of ATSI students accessing Counselling Support has risen from less than 0.5% of the overall Counselling Service total to 3%. With the specific and unique needs of ATSI students at the centre of these intervention, there has been a direct positive impact on ATSI student retention and success, with numerous individual positive outcomes achieved.

- **Maths Learning Centre / Writing Centre – supporting students struggling with maths and writing**

The University of Adelaide Maths Learning Centre and Writing Centre are both committed to supporting student success, fostering an encouraging and inclusive environment for all students, domestic and international, first year to HDR, to develop competence and confidence in their academic skills. Both Centres offer one-on-one consultations, drop-in sessions, and appointments, supporting thousands of students across the academic year; the Centres provide services designed to support the success of a wide range of learners, including those from non-traditional backgrounds, and those who are at risk for a variety of reasons. Students often proactively seek support from the Centres, but many are referred (as part of collaborative cross-referral practices) to the Centres by other university services, such as Counselling, Disability Services, and Academic Progress teams. This is reflective of both Centres' commitment to fostering accessibility and inclusion in improving student success, particularly for students at risk. This commitment is also seen in the Centres' delivery of dozens of embedded in-course lectures, workshops, and seminars, taking direct support to students as part of their coursework.

Two examples are particularly illustrative of the impact that both Centres have on supporting student learning. From the Maths Learning Centre, an Engineering student who had failed a core Maths course multiple times began visiting the Maths Learning Centre every day, where they would discuss concepts and study skills and exam strategies with all Maths Learning Centre tutors. The Centre never gave up on the student, and they passed their course and were able to continue their degree as a result. A similar student in a previous year commented that the Maths Learning Centre “helped me discover the potential I did not know I had”. From the Writing Centre, a Psychology student recently described the Writing Centre service as ‘life-changing’, having previously thought of themselves as someone who “couldn’t write”. In the space of a semester, the student's results improved from receiving low Passes to receiving High Distinctions, with the student particularly noting how thrilled they were at seeing their ability to communicate ideas, and their confidence, improve through one-on-one consultations with several Writing Centre staff.

As an initiative to support equity group students in 2023, selected equity group domestic students have been able to have fees reimbursed for the pathway MathTrackX courses. These courses (taken as 3-6 modules) prepare students for the entry mathematics level required for a number of programs especially in engineering degrees.

## **The University of Queensland**

- **Student Central<sup>1</sup>**

Opening for the 2022 academic year, Student Central delivers an innovative service experience in a post-pandemic era, normalising service and seeking to remove barriers and perceived barriers for students requiring assistance.

Student feedback on support provided over the past 7 months (November 2022 – August 2023) has returned an overall experience score of 4.6 out of 5 (n=435).

Student Central has won multiple architectural awards the most recent being the Queensland Architecture Award for Social Inclusion.

- **Neurodiversity Hub**

In 2021, the Neurodiversity Hub was established, delivering a program of activities supporting neurodiverse students. In 2023, as part of the partnership with the student community, a refreshed offering was launched with promotion through faculties and renewed partnering across UQ to deliver 5 initiatives:

- Tertiary Transition Toolbox (TTT)
- Getting Ahead for Neurodiversity
- Neurodiverse Mentoring
- Neurodiverse Meetups
- ADHD Coaching

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<sup>1</sup> <https://my.uq.edu.au/contact/student-central>

### Student Response

Students registered directly for the Neurodiversity Hub through an EOI process or direct referral from Student Advisers. 78 students completed the EOI; ADHD Coaching was the most popular initiative.

76 unique students took part in 168 engagements across all initiatives.

Initiative	Attendees (unique)
TTT	27
Getting Ahead Workshop	18 views (YouTube)
Neurodiversity Mentoring	13 mentees and 8 mentors
Neurodiversity Meetup	23
ADHC Coaching	20

- **Early Intervention Support Initiative (EISI)**

The University of Queensland is further developing an Early Intervention Support Initiative (EISI) using advanced data, learning and predictive analytics to identify students who are or may in future struggle with studies and could benefit from targeted intervention.

### **Monash University**

Student academic progress is monitored holistically and academic suitability is assessed at a course and unit level. Students at risk of unsatisfactory progress in their course are identified at regular intervals using set triggers, including first unit fails, multiple unit fails and not meeting compulsory course requirements. Students are strongly recommended to use and complete a support tool (My Progress and Support) and, through it, can access a tailored support plan based on their responses to questions and circumstances. The support plan includes all academic and other support services available at Monash and is tailored to students' location and in some cases, their course.

#### [Academic support](#)

Monash supports language and learning support for students across all locations through the **Student Academic Success (SAS)** team, which provides academic language and learning advising, workshops and courses, as well as online resources to support students' academic skills development. SAS oversees LearnHQ, a self-service hub for academic queries and student questions.

In parallel, Monash runs the **Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)** program, which provides in-unit, peer-based support for students to maximise their academic success. PASS was delivered in 74 units in 2023 and was rated very highly by participants and evaluations demonstrate its significant impact on students' academic performance. Accounting for differences between PASS participants and non-participants, students who attended five or more sessions were shown to achieve a final unit mark 5 points higher, on average, than non-participants.

In the co-curricular space, **English Connect** provides students with English language support. The team runs numerous free peer-to-peer programs focusing on the development of communication skills and intercultural competency. The program supports all students to practise conversational English and connect with their peers.

### General student experience

The **William Cooper Institute (WCI)** is a hub for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, learning and engagement — promoting Indigenous leadership and advancement across Monash University. WCI supports students through access to pathways programs, tutoring services, Indigenous students orientation camp, community support and social events designed to foster a sense of belonging and a connection to Monash and each other.

The **Peer Mentoring** program aims to provide students transitioning to Monash in their first semester of study, with a peer-led support network in their faculty. In 2023, the program continued to deliver a range of opt-out and opt-in options for peer mentees. All faculties participated in the program. Additionally, the **Alumni to Student Mentoring Program** continues to match students with an alumni mentor to help them gain industry knowledge and networks to support their transition to the workforce. Collectively, Monash's suite of mentoring programs support a strengthening of student sense of belonging to the University and broader Monash community.

Complementing these programs, **Monash Connect** enhances student engagement by providing support services for all students, including, but not limited to, personalised course guides; pathways information; enrolment assistance; fee payment support and services; emergency loans, grants and hardship help; visa advice. The service can be accessed online or in person.

Monash also runs a series of events for students as part of the **Campus Experience Program** to enhance their sense of belonging to the University. Events delivered as part of this program of work include, but are not limited to:

- Orientation (both semesters)
- Wominjeka Monash
- Monash speaker series
- International student return program
- Pride March
- GIG Fest
- Postgraduate industry networking
- Future Ready

## University of Sydney

- **Pre-emptive support prior to semester for MySydney Scholars (Low SES background)**

Prior to the start of semester 1, 2023, the Learning Hub Mathematics team used learning analytics to determine which MySydney scholars had a gap in assumed knowledge between their HSC mathematics subjects and their enrolled degree. Students who were identified as mathematically underprepared for their courses were sent targeted comms and invited to enrol into our bridging course.

### Impact

- Those who took the bridging course (BC) had a higher proportion of CR (18.8% non-BC versus 33.3% BC)
- Those who did not take the bridging course had a higher proportion of PS results (62.5% non-BC vs 33.3% BC)

This suggests that the bridging course may have contributed to a higher achievement for students who had a gap in their assumed knowledge, which is in line with what historical data suggests.

- **Student Advising Service**

The University has continued to expand the Pop-Up Student Advising Hub to provide students with one-to-one degree planning support, empower students to identify opportunities to support their educational and co-curricular experience and support them in identifying pathways for aligning their educational experience with future aspirations and career goals. In addition to the specific Progression Advising service, students at risk are also supported via the following initiatives:

- Proactive advising phone calls to students identified as at risk of triggering the Job-Ready Graduates package low completion rate (LCR) impacts on students' Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) status in semester 1, 2023.
- Calls to students at risk of losing their scholarships, to offer support, refer them to wellbeing services and provide options for them to manage their studies.
- Post Progression Advising appointment follow up and referral- following up with students who requested it, had action items or needed to be referred to other services across the University.
- Faculty specific student support check ins at key points throughout semester.

- **Academic Learning Support**

The University's Learning Hub has been expanding and enhancing its offerings to extend our reach and impact via an expanded suite of academic support offerings that addresses student and staff needs.

Initiatives including the following are being implemented and delivered to facilitate a supported transition into the University for students and provide ongoing support throughout their studies:

- Enhanced accessibility and visibility of support service to students via colocation of Learning Hub support desk and 1:1 consultations ("Quick Chats").
- Early engagement initiatives to link students in with support mechanisms as early as possible, e.g. SCANA (Student Communication and Needs Analysis), Get Prepared and Getting Started programs.

- Continuous improvement and updating of Learning Hub Canvas site accessible to students from enrolment to graduation. Links to site included in all UoS CANVAS help menus.
- New mathematics support workshops addressing mathematics anxiety, “Developing a Growth Mindset”.
- Peer programs (PASS, Peer-Assisted Study Sessions) supporting students in STEM-related units.
- Learning Hub is exploring the provision of early intervention Mathematics Diagnostic with scoping scheduled in second half of 2023.

### **University of Melbourne**

- **Murrap Barak**

The University of Melbourne has a dedicated Institute, Murrap Barak, which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to help them navigate the University and be prepared for what comes after graduation. Murrap Barak offers cultural, wellbeing, and academic support services (including Commonwealth funded *Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme*). Murrap Barak also refers students to other University services including counselling, and faculty/school support, and maintains strong links with the local Aboriginal community.

- **Peer Mentoring program**

As part of its student experience program, in 2020 the University of Melbourne initiated a Peer Mentoring program in first year and Academic Advising program in undergraduate study. These programs have been designed to support undergraduate students in their transition into university, and to provide them with opportunities to connect with academic staff and other students.

### **University of Western Australia**

- **The Living Room**

UWA launched The Living Room at the end of 2020. The Living Room is a unique, peer led, drop-in mental health and wellbeing service. It is welcoming, inclusive and student-focused, promoting wellbeing through early intervention, peer support and low barrier access to appropriate mental health services. The service differs from traditional university mental health care models in that it is delivered in a homely environment, no appointments are required, front line staff are students, it connects students in need directly to services, and it promotes connectedness and provides a place of belonging for UWA students.

The Living Room is one service within the continuum of mental health and wellbeing services on offer for students. Students who are usually hesitant to access the formal counselling service are accessing The Living Room:

- Male 36%
- 19 years and under: 23%; age 20-24: 52%; age 25-34: 19.5%; 35 plus: 5.5%
- International 44%; Domestic 66%
- Indigenous 2.4%
- Registered with disability 32%
- Undergraduate 70%
- Residential College 29%

The Living Room is complemented by a team of Wellbeing Advisers who offer specialist early intervention support for residential college students, higher degree by research students, international students and law students with plans to expand this model of primary and secondary prevention support. In addition, a 'blueprint' for the design and implementation of The Living Room has been created and shared with other tertiary institutions interested in implementing a similar service.

The Living Room received the 2022 WA Mental Health Awards Prevention or Promotion Award.

- **UWA Indigenous medical students**

We have a strong program of engaging with A&TSI undergraduate students at UWA and making sure they are aware and actively pursue health professions careers, including the MD course. We have a range of scholarships and protected pathways from both high school via undergraduate assured entry (guaranteed place in post-grad MD from high school entry) as well as postgraduate entry. Our numbers remain aspirational, as we quarantine 20 per year but typically only fill 7 – 10 places.

Our selection process for Aboriginal students is bespoke and linked in with the UWA Centre for Aboriginal and Dental Health academics. We allow some flexibility in relation to prior educational achievement for many students who are otherwise potentially suitable (e.g., background in some health professions study). This can mean more challenges in progression through the MD course and the need for higher levels of support (academic, financial, and personal).

### **The Australian National University**

ANU has the "First Year Experience Program" that engages students from diverse backgrounds at key stages of their first year at university. The program was developed on the premise that student experiences and life circumstances differ and not all students have the same resources to prepare for and adapt to the challenges of their first year of university.

The program is tailored to participants' needs and interests. Participants have opportunities to attend an annual camp, academic workshops and social events, utilise additional services and resources, and develop their leadership skills through program based training and experience roles. The program has been a great success.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> More detailed information can be found at: <https://services.anu.edu.au/business-units/wellbeing/engagement-and-success/first-year-experience-program>. Video of an ANU student participation/engagement and success officer discussing the program can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5gZHgK8l9g>

## UNSW Sydney

- Nura Gili, UNSW's Centre for Indigenous Programs. It offers a space of Indigenous students on campus to connect and study and offers a wide range of Indigenous student success services.<sup>3</sup>
- UNSW runs peer mentoring for first year students to support the transition to university, as well as PASS (peer assisted study sessions) to empower student success.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. What are the number of student support staff and number of students they deal with at each Go8 university?

The Go8 appreciates the broad intent of this question, however without further clarity it is difficult to provide a detailed response. Universities provide student support in a variety of ways and modes, at both a central level and via faculties and schools. University libraries, for example, offer a range of supports in addition to those provided by dedicated units. University tutoring roles could be seen as providing student academic support. Roles are embedded across IT support, residential colleges, facilities – and these are all in addition to central teams associated with student and academic support.

One of our members has noted that interactions across all units and staff could potentially involve hundreds of thousands of interactions per year, not all of which would be individually captured.

Details of students supports are also provided across a number of the responses to these questions on notice (eg., questions 1 and 3).

**Indicative** examples of support provided from our member universities – noting these are not exhaustive for the reasons given above – include:

### The University of Sydney

Offers the following support units:

- Health services
- Counselling services
- Inclusion and disability services
- Peer support
- Advising
- Safer Communities (sexual misconduct and DV support)
- Learning support
- Financial support
- Careers and employment support
- Transition support
- Co-curricular support and engagement

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/current-students>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/mentor>

### **UNSW Sydney**

Has student support staff spread across the university, including prevention and engagement staff in the Conduct and Integrity Office, Gendered Violence Research Network, HR, Student Learning, Psychology & Wellness and Health Services.

All of our engagement activities are captured in our annual report. The Psychology and Wellness and Health Services are mostly working in conjunction with external stakeholders. We would need more investigation time to provide you with a fuller report into specific issues.

### **The University of Melbourne**

Student support services at the University of Melbourne include health and counselling services (including access to free and discounted clinics in dental, eyecare, hearing), sporting facilities, security on campus, the Safer Community Programme, spiritual support through chaplaincy services, online health and wellbeing hub, careers and employability support, academic skills, and extra supports such as legal services, student housing advice, equity and disability support, and financial support and scholarships.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Australian National University**

ANU Central teams include Case Managers who support students who are victims of harassment and are also available to assist alleged perpetrators; dedicated staff to assist students if they would like to formally report an incident of gendered based violence; dedicated staff that focusses on the prevention and training campaigns that focusses on the prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the ANU community; and a Sexual Health Nurse who focuses on the promotion of sexual health education and support).

These teams are supported by a range of clinical and pastoral support teams including Residential Support, College support, General practitioners, Clinical Psychologists, Nurses, Pastoral Care teams, Security, and faith-based care.

### **University of Western Australia**

The University of Western Australia provides frontline wellbeing support through the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Team, via the Student Guild Student Assist Team, as well as a cohort of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Contact Officers across Schools and business areas.

### **3. Can you provide details of consultations each Go8 member has had on sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) issues with relevant stakeholders and over what timeframe?**

#### **The University of Sydney**

The University of Sydney's Safer Communities Advisory Group was established in late 2016 to provide regular consultation between the University and the representative student associations and to be a channel to consult with students on policy matters, programs and education/awareness campaigns relating to student experience and welfare in respect to sexual misconduct. Since 2016 the committee meets on a bi-monthly basis and has key representations from Student Representative Council (SRC), Sydney University Postgraduate

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<sup>5</sup> <https://services.unimelb.edu.au/finder>

Representative Association (SUPRA), University of Sydney Union (USU), Sydney University Sports and Fitness (SUSF), Student life, Student Wellbeing, Safer Communities Office, Campus Protective Services, Student Affairs Unit, and Marketing and Communications teams. The following is a list of initiatives that the group have been consulted on:

- Development of the University's standalone 2018 Student Sexual Misconduct Policy and Response Procedures,<sup>6</sup> this includes consultation with the group in all subsequent revisions of the policy and procedures.
- Development of the University's Sexual Misconduct Online Reporting Form in 2018 and the creation of an anonymous reporting option for students.<sup>7</sup>
- Creation of the Student Liaison Officer roles in 2017. These are specialist staff that will be the key contact and support for students who have experienced sexual misconduct.
- Roll out of consent education workshops for student leaders and first years residing in student accommodation and residential colleges in 2018 with increasing uptake each year since.

Separately to the Safer Communities Advisory Group, the Safer Communities Office have engaged with student representative associations, students living with a disability, first nations students, international students and our LGBTIQA+ students on a surveys and feedback to increase accessibility and inclusion for students seeking support.

Students have also been involved as partners in the Student Leadership training co-design project in 2022 which aims to upskill student leaders with essential skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles and better support their peers in clubs and societies. As part of a suite of training, student leaders are required to complete an online module on drivers of sexual violence which equips them with first responder skills and information on where to direct their peers for support. This training program has been ongoing since 2022 and currently bystander training is being piloted by student leaders.

The Safer Communities Office have also been consulting with other relevant stakeholders such as the Faculty of Medicine and Health on provision of training for students on support and reporting options for incidents occurring on clinical placements. This includes provision of first responder training for staff within faculties and schools. This project is continuing.

Additional initiatives highlighting consultations and co-design can be found in the University of Sydney 2022 Annual Report on sexual misconduct.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sydney.edu.au/policies/showdoc.aspx?recnum=PDOC2018/470&RendNum=0>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/making-a-safer-community-for-all/report-sexual-misconduct.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/making-a-safer-community-for-all/annual-report-on-sexual-misconduct.html>

### **Monash University**

In 2017, Monash established the Respect at Monash Committee,<sup>9</sup> which comprises senior leadership, student association representatives, representatives from residential colleges, academic staff with subject matter expertise, student services and independent front line sexual assault services (SECASA, South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault), to govern and oversee Monash University's Respect at Monash initiative<sup>10</sup> to prevent sexual harm and gender-based violence on-campus. All sexual harm prevention and response initiatives at Monash are overseen and endorsed by the Respect at Monash Committee. The Respect at Monash Committee currently meets three times per year, and has further meetings as required to ensure the ongoing progression of key prevention initiatives.

Monash has had a dedicated team focused on the prevention of sexual harm and gender-based violence since 2018. The Respectful Communities team<sup>11</sup> (currently six full-time equivalent) comprises experts with backgrounds in gender studies and the prevention of violence, public health and health promotion, education, law, human rights and social justice. The team works closely with academic experts, victim-survivors and external subject matters experts including the SECASA on all prevention initiatives. The team also engages more than 30 student casual employees to ensure all initiatives are co-designed, incorporating student lived experiences and expertise. Students are engaged in all levels of program design and development of our prevention initiatives and have been since the establishment of the Respectful Communities team. This includes ensuring a diversity of student voices and lived experiences are incorporated. Respectful Communities engages students through various means, including surveys, focus groups and casual employment. Projects delivered in partnership with students help build a sense of connection, community and responsibility.

For example, as part of the ongoing evaluation of our compulsory Respect at Monash module, a pre- and post-survey is administered as part of the program to assess impact. The content of the module including the evaluation was developed in consultation with numerous stakeholders across the University including the Respect at Monash Committee and our Monash Student Organisations.

### **UNSW Sydney**

In 2022 UNSW received gendered violence reports including domestic violence and sexual misconduct from members of the university community who were affected by, or witnessed, gendered violence, whether it was historical or recent on campus or off campus or online, or whether the alleged person responsible was a member of the UNSW community or not. Not all reports referring to sexual assault meet legal definitions.

The University also refers the Committee to the 2022 Annual Report on Gendered Violence Prevention and Response which provides further detail.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.monash.edu/about/who/equity-diversity-inclusion/respect-at-monash/respect-at-monash-committee>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.monash.edu/about/who/equity-diversity-inclusion/respect-at-monash>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.monash.edu/students/support/respectful-communities>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/unsw-adobe-websites/planning-assurance/gendered-violence/1075553065-Gendered%20Violence-Annual-Report-0824.pdf>

## **The University of Melbourne**

### Background

In 2017, the University of Melbourne commenced a targeted program of work to improve its prevention and response to sexual assault and sexual harassment for students, staff and visitors. Key elements of this work have included: the development of a stand-alone sexual misconduct prevention and response policy, improvements to complaints processes, Respect education for staff and students, two action plans, the establishment of a Respect committee and reference group, and publication of annual reports on sexual misconduct.

Consultation with internal and external stakeholders has been integrated into each stage of the Respect Initiatives to ensure that consideration of lived experience, subject matter expertise, legislative duties, leading practice frameworks and accountability processes inform the development and implementation and promote stronger outcomes. Key features of this consultation are outlined below.

### Internal Consultation

In early 2021, an external reviewer conducted stakeholder interviews with 40 staff, students, and leaders across the University to guide **improvements to the University's policy framework and action plan**. Findings were reinforced by an independent, privileged review of historic cases overseen by the University's General Counsel to inform changes to process and practice.

Following on from this, in 2021 stakeholder **consultation on the development of a stand-alone Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy** was undertaken. This consultation included Murrup Barak (the Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development), graduate and early career researchers, academic and professional staff within faculties, HR managers, University Colleges, Academic Board officers, the Pride in Action Network, University of Melbourne Student Union, Graduate Student Association, International students, Safer Community Program, Human Resources, National Tertiary Education Union, University Executive, and Council. The draft policy was then disseminated within the University and to key partners and affiliates for input before finalisation and publication in the University's Policy Library on 14 October 2021.

A **Respect Reference Group** (previously Respect Taskforce) is a consultative forum for faculties, subject matter experts on sexual violence, services, a diverse group of student representatives, and colleges (University-owned) to provide, advice and feedback on the University's approach to eliminating sexual misconduct. It has been **meeting quarterly** since 2021 and includes 29 participants.

The **Respect Committee meets monthly** and includes the President of University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU), the President of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People and Community, the Associate Director, Respect Initiatives, the Executive Director, Students and Scholarly Services and Academic Registrar and the Chief Human Resources Officer. This committee oversees university initiatives and drives progress on SASH-related issues involving both staff and students, including the Respect action plan.

Since her appointment in September 2022, the Associate Director, Gender Equity and Respect, has met **monthly** with **University of Melbourne Student Union** and **Graduate Students Association** Women's Officers, Policy Officers and Sexual Harm Response Coordinators. These meetings identify and address emerging priorities relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment and consult on the development and progress Respect Action Plan.

The **Safer Community program** works in close collaboration with **University Security** and in 2022 redeveloped their afterhours wellbeing procedures to include a timely response to students who advise of sexual misconduct.

**An Intercollegiate Student Wellbeing and Respect Committee** of heads of colleges, and other college staff, meets regularly to discuss prevention and response to sexual misconduct in student residential settings. In addition, representatives from the student union and graduate association, and University staff meet in a roundtable with heads of colleges quarterly to consult on SASH matters.

Consultation is soon to commence with a **panel of students and** on sexual violence across all demographics and course levels, together with subject matter experts, to inform the development of a new **Respect Education module** for students which will be launched in semester 1 of 2024.

#### External Consultation

The University of Melbourne has collaborated with **Our Watch**, particularly regarding its whole-of-university model for primary prevention of gender-based violence. Meetings have been held approximately quarterly between the Our Watch Universities Lead and the Associate Director, Gender Equity and Respect.

The University, including its Safer Community Program, is in close contact with **CASA House**, the Centre Against Sexual Assault, which provides counselling and advocacy support to adult women and men who are victim/survivors of recent and past sexual assault. CASA House has also advised the University of Melbourne in the development of training materials.

The University's Safer Community Program has a working relationship with **Victoria Police**, and routinely consults with its local Sexual Offences and Child-abuse Investigation Teams.

The University of Melbourne consults with other **higher education institutions** in Victoria through the **Victorian Tertiary Primary Prevention Network (TPPN)** on sexual assault and sexual harassment. Meetings are held bi-monthly.

The University of Melbourne is a member of **Universities Australia** and participated in key consultations, including the development of the **Primary Prevention of Sexual Harm in the University Sector Good Practice Guide** and conference.

#### Additional summary of Respect activities

- **Governance:** The Respect at Melbourne Committee has been established to oversee and advise on the implementation of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (approved in 2021) and its associated program of work, captured under the new Respect Action Plan. The Respect at Melbourne Reference Group is a broad, inclusive and diverse consultative forum for faculties, subject matter experts on sexual violence, University services, student organisations and affiliated colleges to provide input and feedback on the Respect Action Plan for eliminating sexual misconduct.
- **Consent/Respect training:** As part of the University's Respect Action Plan, consent training is now compulsory for all students. To ensure compliance, the University has taken the step of withholding the results from students who are yet to complete the required modules (note: as of July 4 this year, 47,716 out of 48,878 students had completed the training). The University's Respect Committee had committed to replacing Consent Matters with a tailored University of Melbourne module, to be introduced from 2024.
- **Respect education for staff:** Respect education is compulsory for all University of Melbourne staff (both permanent and casual). In 2023, two elective programs have been introduced in addition to compulsory training: "Courageous and Respectful Conversations", and "Applying Trauma-Informed Care". Both electives have been fully subscribed.

- **Student complaints:** The University's 'Respect Reference Group' is progressing recommendations made by the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) regarding sexual misconduct complaints processes. A designated internal investigator has now been recruited, and a review of student disciplinary procedures is being undertaken.
- **Colleges:** a quarterly meeting is now held between the Office of the Provost, with representative Heads of Colleges and representatives from UMSU and the University's Graduate Student Association to discuss sexual misconduct issues, and potential for improved collaboration on training and information sharing. All University of Melbourne owned and affiliated colleges run in-house consent training.

### **The Australian National University**

The Australian National University (ANU) is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for our community on our physical campuses as well as online. We are continuously working to achieve a culture that is free from sexual and gender-based violence. Our holistic response to prevention covers three key areas with students at the centre of our decision making.

#### Governance, strategy and action plans

- We have a Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy (2019) that was informed and supported by the lived experience of students. The SVPS was established with the help of Our Watch.
- We released our first action plan - The Student Safety and Wellbeing Plan (2022-2023) which focused on a more coordinated effort and a focus on support in our residences.
- We've set up a Student Safety and Wellbeing Committee which reports directly into ANU Council. This is the first of its kind in the industry and includes almost parity with regards to student members.
- We have updated our Sexual Misconduct Policy and implemented a new procedure for dealing with reporting.

#### Prevention and response

We've established the Respectful Relationships Unit (RRU) (2019) sustainable cultural change through evidence-based education and professional services. Most recently RRU has developed the following prevention initiatives:

- In January 2023, the Rights, Relationships and Respect program launched. This is an education program which introduces new students at ANU to core concepts about consent and respectful relationships and is mandatory for students living in residence. We designed this program with the help of student leaders at the ANU.
- Released the Respectful Relationships Unit's (RRU)<sup>13</sup> sexual violence prevention toolkit,<sup>14</sup> a practical guide to help implement change across all areas of ANU.
- New staff training programs are being piloted this year to further support our student facing staff and their work.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.anu.edu.au/students/health-safety-wellbeing/respectful-relationships>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.anu.edu.au/files/corporate\\_message/RRU22049%20Respectful%20Relationships%20toolkit%20v6%20WEB.pdf](https://www.anu.edu.au/files/corporate_message/RRU22049%20Respectful%20Relationships%20toolkit%20v6%20WEB.pdf)

- Implemented the Residential Community Safety Officer program across residences to add additional safety and support to our residential students after hours.

Additionally, ANU has been working on uplifting and expanding the current support services offered to students and staff for reporting, disclosures and case management through the Student Safety and Wellbeing Team.

- The Student Safety and Wellbeing in partnership with staff development teams and the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) team hosts training sessions to support staff dealing with student disclosures and other matters across Colleges and Service Divisions on campus.
- We've successfully recruited additional GPs and appointed a Nurse Practitioner to improve access of care and address gaps. Our Nurse Practitioner provides focused sexual health care and wellbeing support for students.
- Two new case managers have joined our team - including a fluent Mandarin speaker who has worked extensively with international students. Students can drop into the Health and Wellbeing Centre in Kambri to speak with a case manager.

#### Institutional reports and communications

The documents, communication and reports available through the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response page<sup>15</sup> demonstrate our ongoing commitment to improving institutional transparency and accountability about incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus.

#### **The University of Western Australia**

In 2016, The University of Western Australia convened the Safer Community Working Group. This group meets six times per year, under a co-Chair model between the Director of Student Life and the Student Guild (student union) President.

The Working Group consists of key stakeholders across the university, The Student Guild, student residences, and Campus Management. Six of the positions on the Working Group are reserved for students each year.

The University of Western Australia has two staff members on the Go8 Working Group: the Director of Student Life and the Manager of the Integrity and Standards Unit. If representation were to be expanded to include students, The University of Western Australia would recommend nomination of the incumbent elected Student Guild President (or nominee) and the elected Student Guild Women's Officer (or nominee).

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.anu.edu.au/about/strategic-planning/sexual-violence-prevention-and-response>

**4. Can you provide the number of offers and acceptances for Indigenous students by location for each Go8 member?**

**Indigenous undergraduate applications, offers and enrolments:  
by Go8 university and regionality**

University	Location	<i>Applications*</i>	Offers	Enrolments	Enrolment to Offer rate
UQ	Metro	286	101	77	76%
	Regional	176	46	28	61%
	Remote	20	3	3	100%
	Unknown	1			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>72%</b>
Adelaide	Metro	124	49	41	84%
	Regional	63	22	9	41%
	Remote	3	0		
	Unknown	6	2		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>68%</b>
UNSW	Metro	77	77	61	79%
	Regional	34	34	27	79%
	Remote	1	1	1	100%
	Unknown	6	6	5	83%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>80%</b>
UWA	Metro	79	69	55	80%
	Regional	30	24	18	75%
	Remote	15	13	11	85%
	Unknown	42	25	2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>66%</b>
Melbourne	Metro	188	43	29	67%
	Regional	98	23	16	70%
	Remote	5	1	1	100%
	Overseas	4	2	2	100%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>70%</b>
Sydney	Metro	130	113	68	60%
	Regional	17	14	7	50%
	Remote	2	1	1	100%
	Unknown				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>59%</b>
ANU	Metro	65	35	19	54%
	Regional	71	22	12	55%
	Remote	8	6	5	83%
	Unknown				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>57%</b>
Monash	Metro	97	40	34	85%
	Regional	46	8	7	87%
	Remote				
	Unknown	51	13	8	61%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>85%</b>

\* May include multiple counts when individuals apply for more than one course

## **Questions on Notice Received after the Hearing on the 5 September 2023**

### **5. Uncapping Indigenous Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs)**

- a. For the 2022 calendar year, please provide:**
  - i. The number of applications you have received from Indigenous students at each of your member universities**
  - ii. The offers made to Indigenous at each of your member universities**
  - iii. The number of acceptances by Indigenous students.**
- b. Please provide the data above broken down by metropolitan, regional, rural and remote students for each university.**

Please refer to response to Question 4, above.

- c. Have you received advice from the Department of Education on how funding for each of your member universities will be adjusted for the demand driven Indigenous places?**
- d. If so, please provide a copy of the advice received.**

Six of our members reported that they have not received advice from the Department in relation to this matter.

One of these members noted that such contact was not anticipated, as the adjustments will occur in accordance with clauses in all providers' funding agreements with the Commonwealth and with Section 33-5 of the HESA once amended.

Another member noted that detailed consultation in relation to some of the issues raised in these Questions on Notice occurred through the initial Accord discussion paper and submission process conducted earlier in the year.

One member advised they had received verbal advice that their Maximum Basic Grant Amount (MBGA) will be subject to a one-off downward adjustment to an estimated value of the funding for metropolitan Indigenous students. This is in line with the approach taken when demand driven funding was introduced for regional/remote Indigenous students. The member does not have information on how the estimate will be calculated, but suggests it may be on the basis of actual load consumed in 2021 or 2022. If confirmed, the effect of this is that universities will only get extra funding over and above what they would have received if their metropolitan Indigenous enrolments grow.

## 6. Commonwealth Supported Places

- a. For each of your member universities, please advise the number of Commonwealth Supported Places allocated to each university for the 2022 calendar year.
- b. For each of your member universities, please advise how many of the allocated Commonwealth Supported Places were filled for the 2022 calendar year.

Public universities are able to decide how many domestic students they enrol in bachelor level courses up to a maximum base grant amount (MBGA) (excluding in designated courses, currently limited to medicine). However, the *level* of funding for Commonwealth Supported Places is limited at a level determined by the Minister for Education. The MBGA is set out in the university's funding agreement.

This means the Government does not determine how many CSPs are funded each year. Each Table A provider determines the mix of courses offered up to the MBGA, and the number of students funded within a given MBGA can vary considerably depending on their discipline mix.

The number of Commonwealth Supported Places is shown below for 2021, as well as the maximum basic grant amount allocation for Go8 universities in 2021 and 2022.

The 2022 grant amount is lower than 2021 due to the legislated Job Ready Graduates (JRG) reduction in average per-student funding for domestic Commonwealth supported students.

### CSP student load (EFTSL) 2021 by Go8 university

Go8 university	EFTSL
The University of Sydney	25,675
University of New South Wales	24,097
Monash University	30,836
The University of Melbourne	25,078
The University of Queensland	23,556
The University of Western Australia	13,860
The University of Adelaide	14,420
The Australian National University	9,072
<b>Total Go8</b>	<b>166,594</b>

**Maximum base grant amounts (\$ million) from 2021 - 2023 funding agreements**

Go8 university	2021		2022	
	Funding envelope	Designated places*	Funding envelope	Designated places*
The University of Sydney	280.9	24.4	275.3	24.9
University of New South Wales	252.2	32.1	244.0	32.8
Monash University	303.6	40.1	290.0	40.7
The University of Melbourne	259.9	27.1	251.1	27.5
The University of Queensland	275.0	29.2	268.4	29.8
The University of Western Australia	140.7	22.1	138.2	22.5
The University of Adelaide	158.6	21.7	152.9	22.1
The Australian National University	74.9	9.7	66.0	9.9
<b>Total Go8</b>	<b>1,745.8</b>	<b>206.4</b>	<b>1,685.9</b>	<b>210.2</b>

\* Medical places

**7. 50 per cent pass rule**

- a. Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for the number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule in the calendar year 2022.
- b. Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for the number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption. Please break the data down by category for which the exemption was applied.
- c. Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for the number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that were granted an exemption. Please break the data down by category in which the exemption was granted.
- d. Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for the number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption which were not granted. Please break the data down by category for which the exemption was applied.
- e. Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for the number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption which were not granted and a description of their equity cohort, if applicable (ie. rural/regional, low SES, first in family, Indigenous)
- f. What is the process at each of your member universities for when a student is flagged as potentially at risk of failing 50% of their course?
  - i. Is this different for each university? Please describe or provide the policy for each university.
  - ii. What student support policies are in place to correct a student's performance academically to reduce their risk of failing?
  - iii. Do you have data on how many students impacted by the 50 per cent rule left the system or chose to continue with their studies as full fee paying students? If so, please provide broken down by each university.

Data provided by our member universities on the 50 per cent pass rule is provided in response to question 5 above.

## **8. Student Support Policy**

- a. The Department of Education has released a consultation paper to develop a student support policy. Did the Department or the minister's office consult with the Group of Eight or any of your member universities in developing this paper?**
- b. If so, please advise the date the Group of Eight or any of your member universities were consulted.**

All Go8 members advised that they were not consulted.

The University of Sydney noted that in their 25 August 2023 submission to the Senate Education and Employment Committee,<sup>16</sup> concerns were expressed about the consultation on both the Bill and guidelines occurring after the Bill's introduction to Parliament. For example: "Our main concern with the Bill therefore, is not with its policy objectives, but that by not genuinely consulting with stakeholders before introducing it to Parliament, the Government is risking similar unintended consequences to those it is seeking to address after the Low Completion Rate measure was extended to students enrolled with Commonwealth-support in Australia's public universities – as part of the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) package in 2020."

- c. In terms of student satisfaction with teaching and course quality, do you support a student ombudsman being put in place as a mechanism for students to escalate complaints if they are unsatisfied with the response provided by the university processes?**

Go8 member responses to this question varied.

One member was supportive, noting that this is a lesser step than current avenues (eg., to the Human Rights Commission which can be onerous and take considerable time and effort for all parties).

One member noted they would be open to considering such a proposal if it emerges as a necessary step following rigorous and evidence-based review and consultation to determine the scale of the problem and the adequacy or otherwise of existing complaint mechanisms and remedies available to students (both domestic and international) including: TEQSA (and ASQA for VET providers/dual sector providers); Commonwealth and State Ombudsmen; and under Federal and State consumer protection laws.

Other members responded as follows:

- We do not support a student ombudsman. As an institution we have a clear complaints and appeal process. Students already have access to the State Ombudsman for complaints and they can also contact TEQSA directly with complaints and Freedom of Information (Fol) requests.
- No (do not support). We made reference to this in our Accord response, saying: "We do not recommend the additional layer of a Commonwealth Ombudsman for higher education, because appeals relating to state-registered public education institutions can be lodged with the relevant State/Territory Ombudsman".

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<sup>16</sup> [25 August 2023 submission to the Senate Education and Employment Committee](#)

- On face value we have concerns with the concept of an Ombudsman for student complaints without a clear understanding of why it is needed, its remit and its powers. It will no doubt add to the administrative burden of universities. Complaints should be addressed by the institution in question, with appropriate oversight by the regulator to ensure a timely, appropriate response. The Provider Category Standards is the regime through which course quality should be addressed. Universities are also responsible and accountable for their internal processes to ensure a fair hearing and to manage complaints, including the provision of robust internal appeals processes where students are not satisfied with the response provided through the formal complaints process.
- The University of Queensland has a comprehensive complaints process, which may escalate to the Queensland Ombudsman if students remain unsatisfied with the outcome of University processes. It would appear to be an unnecessary duplication for a separate Ombudsman to be created. However, should a Student Ombudsman be created, it is anticipated that such an office should be established with the same functions to investigate, consider and advise on the administrative actions of agencies. It is noted that 'student satisfaction with teaching and course quality' is very broad terms of reference, extending beyond the HESA (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023, and is related but distinct from the types of matters that might be managed via a student ombudsman. As is usual with the functions of an ombudsman, such an office should not have an influence over the outcome of a University decision, rather they would consider the processes associated with the administrative actions taken by the University and associated with the assessment of a grievance or complaint. The value of a role such as a Student Ombudsman would be different for each institution based upon their existing complaints and grievance processes. For this reason, the University of Queensland would advocate that institutions should be able to individually determine whether a Student Ombudsman role would be appropriate in their framework.
- We would support any mechanism that provides clear support channels for students to have complaints resolved. However, any mechanism would have to be appropriately resourced and understand the ways in which individual universities handle complaints around the student experience. Due consideration would need to be made as to what (if any) remit a student ombudsman would have to resolve complaints in a timely fashion. It is also worth noting, that in teaching and course quality, emerging research (from the likes of Heffernan et al) indicates that student evaluations are openly prejudiced against the sector's most underrepresented academics and that they can in some instances contribute to further marginalisation of these groups in a university context.

**d. There has been significant discussion publicly recently about student safety on campus in relation to sexual assault and harassment. How are the Group of Eight Universities managing this?**

Please refer to response to Question 3, above.

**e. Have you consulted with Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus on your management strategies?**

Member universities reported consulting with a range of organisations, including (noting that the following comprises a collated list):

### External bodies

- The Survivor Hub<sup>17</sup>
- Full Stop Australia<sup>18</sup>
- The Gendered Violence Research Network
- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)
- Our Watch
- Consultation is currently being sought with Western Australian organisations, including the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, to align with the Western Australian Sexual Violence Prevention Framework as well as the Sexual Assault Resource Centre
- Equal Opportunities Commission (SA) (which referenced material from End Rape on Campus to the University)

### Internal bodies

- ANU:
  - Gender Institute Network (best practice in the industry and individuals including Lyn Walker AM)
  - Student Safety and Wellbeing Committee of Council (includes experts such as Catherine Fitzpatrick (advisor to government), Padma Rama PSM (CEO of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety) and Tanya Hosch (General Manager of Inclusion and Social Policy for the AFL)
- UWA: the University of Western Australia is in the process of consulting with students, staff, The Student Guild, student residences and key stakeholders in Western Australia to inform the development of the new Safe and Respectful Community Framework based on the Our Watch Educating for Equality Framework.
- University of Adelaide: End Rape On Campus was part of initial workshops and consultation with University of Adelaide Student Life in the formulation of Specialist Counselling and Training services. Further development of specialist services is heavily guided by leading practice initiatives evidenced by Universities Australia and the GO8 in the SASH (Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment) space.
- The University of Queensland: The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Professor Deborah Terry AO, has met and spoken with representatives of End Rape on Campus (EROC) a number of times and has given a personal commitment to oversee a range of changes to improve the prevention and management of sexual misconduct affecting our community. This includes greater alignment and collaboration with residential colleges, even though they are independent entities and the establishment of a steering committee to ensure core policies align on the prevention and management of sexual misconduct, and more effective and transparent sharing of information and training.

- f. Is the Group of Eight supportive of legislation governing the student support policy being passed before the policy is actually developed?**

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.thesurvivorhub.org.au/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://fullstop.org.au>

**The Go8 members do not support the legislation being passed before the policy is actually developed.**

Further feedback included:

- Legislating without proper consultation assumes that universities don't already have a suite of policies and procedures that are designed to support students.
  - It is unclear how an additional and separate Support for Students Policy creates meaningful change for students. The preferred approach would be to work with Higher Education Providers and the current regulative environment to ensure that the proposed requirements are met within existing frameworks to avoid duplication and inefficiency of effort and resourcing.
  - Consultation on the policy, including how it will be implemented and reporting metrics to be used is necessary before it is passed.
  - We are concerned that the approach taken to implement a Support for Students policy requires rapid and costly revision of our university's existing suite, imposes additional and significant costs of administration and reporting, is awaiting an evidence basis, and does not nuance different practice nor student academic outcomes across institutions.
  - The University would prefer to see more of the policy and operational detail before the legislation is progressed. We acknowledge the need for oversight/accountability measures to ensure that student progress is being appropriately monitored, and that students are properly supported in their studies, such that students are given the best chance to succeed in their studies, and that those who are disengaged do not continue to accrue HELP debt. However, there is already a regulatory regime to manage much of the substance of the Bill. TEQSA-registered providers are subject to the Threshold Standards. Since the Minister has requested that the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) review the application of the Threshold Standards in relation to student support, it would make sense to wait for the outcomes of this Review before introducing new measures (i.e. to assess the suitability of the current framework before proceeding).
- 9. Legislation: Please provide a copy of any correspondence the Group of Eight, or any of your member universities, have sent to or received from Minister Clare, his office or the Department of Education in relation to the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023 (the Bill) or any of the individual elements contained within the Bill. This includes informal correspondence such as emails and whatsapp messages.**

Our members reported no contact from the Minister, his office or the Department on this matter.