**MRS Approach to Fostering Safe and Respectful Interpersonal Relationships, 2017**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to list the suite of current strategies employed by Monash Residential Services (MRS), in ensuring that all residents are able to foster safe and respectful relationships particularly with a focus on the role of consent in all types of interpersonal interactions.

Ensuring respectful relationships and where relevant, responsible and safe sexual behaviour, within the residential community is an area of important focus for MRS. The unique composition of the majority of residents aged between 18-24, combined with the enormous diversity in backgrounds, culture, sexualities, and life experiences, necessarily requires that appropriate safeguards and supports are in place to create a safe, respectful and healthy environment for all.

**Current landscape of offerings:**

- **The MRS Conditions of Residency** – Articulates the policy obligations set by MRS to residents, to demonstrate safe and respectful behaviour in all forms. Though this policy does not explicitly define specific behaviour that may be considered inappropriate, it makes clear reference to ‘sexual assault and/or sexual harassment,’ as a breach that would see a resident temporarily or permanently evicted from the residence. These conditions also make reference to the scope of the Director of MRS, the College Head, more broadly the Residential Support Team and the involvement of other University staff where appropriate, in the provision of support and responsibility to ensuring the safety of all residents. This policy, and more broadly Monash University’s responsibilities in this space is situated within the broader legal frameworks that govern behaviour, including that of the [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2000L0173).

- **Partnerships and access to services** – A critical component of the MRS response is in ensuring strong relationships with the University’s health services (Medical and Dental; Counselling and Mental Health and includes the availability of specific support through the [South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (SECASA)](https://www.secasafe.org.au)). Further, the well-established link with the Safer Community Unit in identifying and supporting individuals impacted by at-risk behaviour is critical in mitigating any problem behaviours that may arise. In 2016 MRS partnered with the [MSA Women’s Office](https://www.amsa.unimelb.edu.au/services/womens-office) to produce and circulate posters on consent, and continues to develop this partnership in 2017.

- **Orientation and Transition approach** – Given the critical role of Orientation and Transition in the student lifecycle, MRS devotes a significant amount of time and resources in ensuring all students have a shared understanding of MRS’ expectations and behaviour standards.
  - **Arrival Presentation** – compulsory viewing by all residents prior to collection of their keys, this informational video was refreshed and revamped for 2017 to include the [Monash University Consent video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ConsentVideo), as well as detailing behavioural expectations. Being incorporated into the Arrival Presentation, viewing of this video is now a mandatory requirement of residency.
  - **ResStart** – through an online portal, and coupled with compulsory in-Hall sessions delivered by residential support staff, every resident is exposed to specific key messages around consent and safety through the [ResStart initiative](https://www.amsa.unimelb.edu.au/services/resstart).
  - **Sexpectations** – originally developed by student leaders, the Sexpectations workshop is an interactive forum for residents to explore themes of sexuality, consent and community expectations. Residents responsible for the delivery of Sexpectations undergo a ‘Train the Trainer’ workshop, delivered by staff from the Safer Community Unit. Additionally, SECASA reviewed and approved Sexpectations to ensure that the workshop would effectively develop our residents’ knowledge and understanding of consent, and the skills and behaviours required to navigate sexual relationships.
- Alcocups – closely aligned to issues of safety in interpersonal relationships is ensuring that all students living on campus are able to consume alcohol in a responsible fashion and in line with the MRS Alcohol Policy. MRS, in collaboration with leading alcohol education provider, Alcocups, deliver an annual workshop on this topic for all residents.

**Reporting and support framework cards** – Before arrival, every residence was fitted with reporting and support framework cards which outlines MRS’ standards, expectations and commitment to providing a safe environment for all residents. The card details the process of reporting and support services available for students who have experienced sexual assault, harassment, misconduct or any form of inappropriate behaviour.

**Ongoing training and programs** – With the purpose of strengthening the capacity of student leaders to challenge poor behaviour where it may arise, RAs are required to complete a range of mandatory training programs. These include (but are not limited to) Respectful Communities Training (RCI), White Ribbon Training and Equal Opportunity Training. Additional non-compulsory training is also offered and promoted to Resident Advisors wishing to extend their knowledge and personal development for the betterment of the residential communities. Further to this, a range of training is currently in wide effect among the residential community around the areas of responsible alcohol consumption, bystander behaviour and identity and inclusiveness – as these priorities connect intimately with enabling a safe and healthy sexual environment for all. All training is available for residents, irrespective of the RA status.

**Campaigns and events** – MRS continues to promote the University’s *Respect Now Always* campaign. As an active contributor to the campaigns messaging, MRS champions the determination of the University to ensure that staff and students are safe from sexual assault and sexual harassment, promoting safety for all at Monash.

**White Ribbon Campaign** – MRS is a proud champion of the White Ribbon Initiative to tackle male violence against females and actively promotes the White Ribbon Ambassador initiative across the organisation. Over the past three years, this initiative has continued to grow in size and scale. The committee is made up of RAs from differing halls who are responsible for organising a White Ribbon Dinner night to raise awareness of the issue as well as implement smaller campaigns and initiatives within halls.

**Sunday Supper events** – During first semester 2017, all residential halls will feature a series of Sunday Supper events focused on respectful interpersonal relationships. This includes a residence specific screening of the Hunting Ground. Though different in context, MRS recognises that this documentary features several messages that affirm and reinforce the Conditions of Residence and programming in this area. It is proposed that MRS will engage the support and assistance of Minus 18 (Australia’s largest youth led organisation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans youth) to provide youth support, mentoring and training for residents in semester 2.

**Continuous improvement and the resident perspective** – MRS recognises the need to continuously strengthen and innovate practised in this area, as informed by the experiences of residents. The Community Conversations series has been embedded into organisational practice and provides a forum where engaged residents come together and identify opportunities for improvement in MRS’ practice. Where appropriate, these focus group sessions provide opportunities to listen to resident feedback and perspectives with regards to fostering safe and respectful interpersonal relationships.