



Consultation on the Draft Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education – Student accommodation peak bodies and providers

Draft Action Plan and proposed National Code

Detail on the roles and responsibilities of accommodation providers is needed

Acknowledging the complexity in the student accommodation sector, some stakeholders stated the Draft Action Plan could further expand on the roles, responsibilities and requirements of accommodation providers. They identified there is an opportunity to further a whole-of-institution approach by ensuring requirements of higher education providers and accommodation providers are clear and requirements to collaborate and share information to support students are formalised.

Stakeholders noted there are codes of practice in the UK and NZ regarding student wellbeing and experience in student accommodation and these could serve as a foundation for future work in the Australian context.

Differences between accommodation providers should be clarified

Many stakeholders noted the differences between student accommodation providers to be articulated in the Draft Action Plan as there are different legal arrangements in place across the sector. Some stakeholders expressed an interest in increasing their skills in responding to and investigating incidents of gender-based violence as they believed their workforces were not sufficiently trained, or resourced, to manage these incidents.

Further clarity is required on the intersections between accommodation providers and higher education providers

Stakeholders broadly agreed that there is variation in the level of engagement between higher education providers and student accommodation providers, with this engagement dependent on the legal nature of the relationship as well as the values of respective senior leaders. There was discussion on the importance of government considering legislative obligations (for example, jurisdictional Residential Tenancy Acts) of some accommodation providers as the final Action Plan is developed.

Some stakeholders also suggested that the final Action Plan include provisions for higher education and accommodation providers to formalise sharing information on incidents of gender-based violence – while respecting the privacy and agency of students who report incidents.

National Student Ombudsman

The difference between education service providers and accommodation service providers must be recognised

Stakeholders emphasised that there are vast differences between complaints handling within education providers and student accommodation providers, and differences between the accommodation service providers themselves. It was suggested that different metrics would be appropriate for accommodation providers, noting the more socially complex and multi-dimensional environments.

Some stakeholders noted that the different types of student accommodation providers would create inconsistencies in students' access to the Ombudsman.

