



Australian Government
Department of Education

Welcome

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CODE TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

WEBINAR: Introduction to the National Code and
Higher Education provider requirements



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past and present.

We extend our respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with us today.



Victim-survivor acknowledgement

We acknowledge the profound strength, courage and resilience of those who have experienced gender-based violence. Their lived experiences and tireless advocacy have been instrumental in shaping the National Code.

We also recognise the commitment of advocates, practitioners and community members who have stood alongside victim survivors, amplifying their stories and driving change.



Agenda

- The need for the National Code
- Overview of the National Code
- Standards and requirements of Higher Education Providers
- How the Department of Education will guide, monitor and enforce compliance
- Next Steps
- Q&A



The extent of the problem

Higher education as a site of gender-based violence

According to the National Student Safety Survey, 2021:

- **1 in 6 students experienced sexual harassment.**
- **1 in 20 students experience sexual assault.**
- **1 in 4 students in student accommodation reported sexual harassment.**
- **Many students found that the trauma of the original incident was compounded by their university's mishandling of their report.**

1 in 3 staff in higher education experience sexual harassment

National Tertiary Education Union Survey, 2023



The need for the National Code

Gender-based violence is an epidemic in Australia

There were 40,087 victims of sexual assault recorded in Australia in 2024, increasing by 10% (3,735 victims) from the previous year.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024)

1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021-22

2.8 million Australians have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15

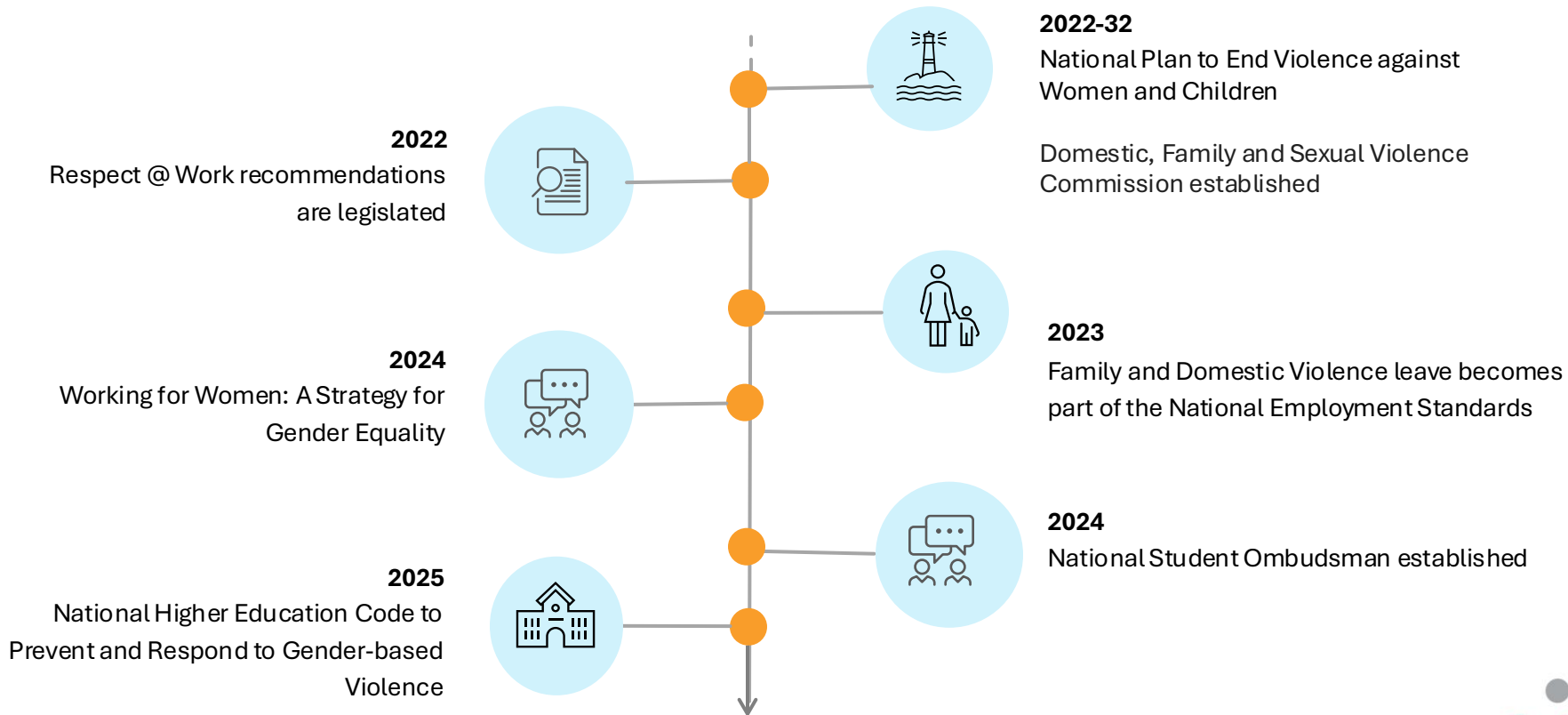
Australian Institute of Health and Wellness

On average, 1 woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner

Australian Institute of Criminology, 2023



Whole-of-government approach



National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence

PROPOSED NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CODE TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE – SUBJECT TO PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence

Name

This instrument is the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*.

Commencement

The *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* commences:

- on 1 January 2026 for Providers that are Table A Providers and Table B Providers under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth) as at 1 January 2026;
- on 1 January 2027 for all other Providers registered under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth) before 1 January 2027; and
- on the date on which the Provider is registered under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth) for all Providers registered after 1 January 2027.

Part A The National Higher Education Framework to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence

The objects of the *Universities Accord (National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence) Act 2025* (Cth) (**Act**) are:

- to reduce the incidence of Gender-based Violence in higher education; and
- to establish national standards and requirements for higher education providers to prevent and respond to Gender-based Violence; and
- to establish a regulatory framework to monitor and enforce compliance with the national standards and requirements.

Providers are registered Higher Education Providers under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth) (**TEQSA Act**).

Under the Act, the purpose of the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (the Code) is to provide national standards and requirements for Providers in connection with preventing and responding to Gender-based Violence, including in relation to student accommodation. The Act sets out the matters about which the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence can impose requirements on Providers.

The National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence requires that the Provider take actions that are proportionate and safe when Gender-based Violence is experienced or engaged in by the Students or Staff of a Provider, regardless of where, or the context in which, the Gender-based Violence occurs.

The National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence is the following Standards:

- Standard 1: Accountable leadership and governance** - Effective governance and a Whole-of-Organisation approach prioritises safety and support in the prevention of and response to Gender-based Violence.
- Standard 2: Safe environments and systems** - Higher Education Providers' environments are safe and systems continuously improve to prevent and respond to Gender-based Violence.

Standards of the National Code

Accountable Leadership and Governance

Embeds at the highest level a whole-of-org prevention & response approach to gender-based violence

1

Safe environments and systems

Requires that environments are safe and systems continuously improve.

2

Knowledge and capability

Commits higher education providers to continually build knowledge and capability.

3

Safety and Support

Response and support services are safe, person-centred and trauma informed.

4

Safe Processes

All processes are safe, accessible and timely.

5

Data, Evidence and Impact

Providers use evidence to inform their approach, measure change and contribute to the national evidence base.

6

Safe Student Accommodation

Requires that student accommodation is safe for all students and staff.

7

Key compliance milestones and timelines

Initial compliance date: Table A and Table B providers: 1 January 2026
Other providers: 1 January 2027

Date / Frequency	Summary of Requirements
By the initial compliance date (and every 4 years thereafter)	Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan (including Gender Equality Action Plan) and Outcomes Framework endorsed by the Governing Body and submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Education.
By 30 June following initial compliance date and every year thereafter	Annual reporting submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Education. Names of student accommodation submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Education.
6 monthly from initial compliance date	Report against the Outcomes Framework submitted to the Provider's Governing Body.
2 years after initial compliance date and every 2 years thereafter	Report on Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan including Gender Equality Action Plan, submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Education.

Standard 1: Accountable leadership and governance

- **Whole-of-Organisation approach:** Providers must embed gender-based violence prevention and response across all operations, policies, and practices.
- **Leadership accountability:** Vice-Chancellors, CEOs or equivalent must lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive Prevention and Response Plan that must include: a Gender Equality Action Plan, a Whole-of-Organisation approach, and an Outcomes Framework (reviewed every 6 months).
- **Governance structures:** Institutions must establish dedicated governance with expertise in student and staff safety and wellbeing.
- **Collaboration:** Plans must be informed by engagement with students, staff, accommodation providers, and those with lived experience.

Embed Whole-of-organisation approach in domains of:

- Leadership, culture and environment
 - Structures, norms and practices
 - Systems and infrastructure
 - Services delivery – curriculum, teaching and learning
 - Policy and procedures
 - Management and governance
 - Community engagement
 - Business
 - Research
 - Partnership
- 

Standard 2: Safe environments and systems

- **Safe places to learn and work:** Providers must minimise risk of potential harm in recruitment and employment processes.
 - **GBV prevention and response policy:** Providers must collaboratively develop, implement and review a whole of organisation GBV prevention and response policy, in consideration of gender impact assessments, effective response, disclosers' educational outcomes, and student and staff safety and wellbeing.
 - **Prohibition of non-disclosure agreements:** Provider must prohibit the use of non-disclosure agreements, unless requested by a discloser.
 - **National Student Ombudsman recommendations:** Provider must implement recommendations made by the National Student Ombudsman.
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Standard 3: Knowledge and capability

- **Prevention education and training:** Providers must deliver ongoing, comprehensive prevention education and training to its students, leadership and Staff.
 - **Prevention communication:** Providers must engage in evidence-based and evaluated prevention communications across study, work, living and social environments.
 - **Responding to disclosures education and training:** Providers must deliver, monitor and evaluate education and training on responding to disclosures to key audiences.
 - **Expertise and experience:** Providers must require that risk assessments under the National Code, formal reports, investigations and disciplinary proceedings are carried out by staff with appropriate expertise.
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Standard 4: Safety and support

- **Safe, person-centred responses:** Providers must promote, assess and provide access to safe, person-centred responses, practices and support services consistent with a trauma informed approach and best practice.
- **Safety and support for disclosers:** Providers must consider the views of disclosers and collaboratively develop expert-led safety and support plans.
- **Support for Respondents:** Providers provide expert-developed support plans with respondents in consideration of the discloser's safety and other factors.
- **Effectiveness of support services:** Providers must monitor and evaluate its support services every three years to inform delivery.

Standard 5: Safe processes

- **Accessible and anonymous reporting:** Providers must provide accessible channels for formal, anonymous and third-party reporting.
- **Multiple pathways to manage disclosures and outcomes of investigations:** Multiple pathways ensure proportional, safe response and victim-survivor considerations.
- **Investigations:** Providers must adhere to specific requirements underscoring accountability, context, safety, discloser's views and party's rights.
- **Disciplinary processes and appeals:** Formal reports and disciplinary processes must be resolved within specified timeframes to ensure fairness and transparency.



Standard 6: Data, evidence & impact

Strengthening data collection systems and expanding the evidence base are essential components of a comprehensive response to addressing gender-based violence.

Strengthened data collection systems and annual reporting: Providers must seek and provide to the regulator, including:

- disaggregated demographic GBV data
 - data for each disclosure and formal report
 - data on the provider's response to disclosure
 - data on the outcomes of each investigation and disciplinary process
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Standard 7: Safe Student Accommodation

Safety in accommodation is not just about avoiding harm but about protecting students' rights to feel secure in their homes and to pursue their education without fear or disruption.

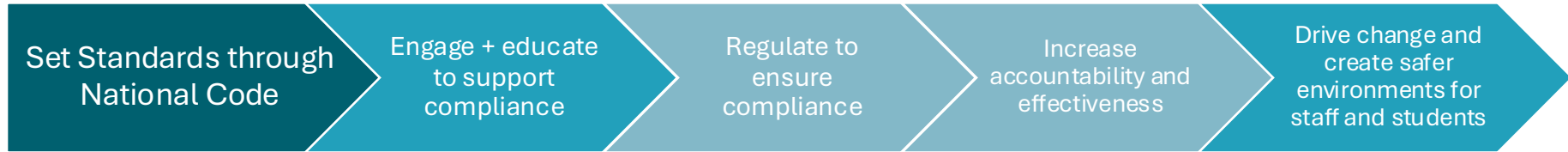
Applies to 3 distinct categories of student accommodation:

1. Student accommodation that is directly owned, managed and/or operated by a higher education provider
2. Student accommodation that is otherwise under the control of a higher education provider within the meaning of 50AA of the Corporations Act 2001
3. Student accommodation that is affiliated with a higher education provider.

Providers are required to do **everything reasonably possible to meet the National Code's standards** by seeking out and reporting on legal arrangements with Affiliated Student Accommodation Providers.



Driving change through regulation



A higher education sector free from gender-based violence, driven by enforceable standards, evidence-based practice, and accountability.

Regulatory function



**Department
of Education**



**Education,
engagement
and regulatory
guidance**



**Broad
Regulatory
Powers**



**Compliance
and
Enforcement**

What happens next

The National Code comes into force on 1 January 2026, and with it, providers must begin meeting their reporting obligations.

- For Table A and Table B providers the initial compliance date is January 1, 2026
- For remaining providers registered with TEQSA it is January 1, 2027

This includes publishing a Prevention and Response Plan, submitting annual data reports, and reviewing progress against an Outcomes Framework every six months.



Q & A



Thank you

<https://www.education.gov.au/highereducationGBVcode>

