Student Wellbeing

REPORTING A SEXUAL ASSAULT

REPORTING A SEXUAL ASSAULT – WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

This factsheet is to provide you with information about your options for reporting a sexual assault or sexual harassment.

A person who has experienced a sexual assault may choose to make a disclosure to the University of Newcastle and/or NSW Police, or to not make any report at all. Reports to the University can be investigated and responded to under University rules and policies, such as the Student Conduct Rule. Reports made to police are investigated and offenders may be prosecuted under the Australian legal system.

If you choose to make a report, there are four options available:

REPORTING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

The University takes all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously, and will not tolerate behaviour that compromises the safety and wellbeing of staff or students. There are two options for reporting sexual misconduct:

1. Informal disclosure to the University
   • The purpose of informal disclose is seeking advice and information from the University.
   • Disclosures can be made anonymously.
   • Information can be kept on file with a request for no further action and can be used at a later date in a formal report.
   • Information may be used by the University to identify opportunity to reduce future risk and/or identify a pattern of risk.
   • You can complete the disclosure form online (search “Report Sexual Assault” on the University website), via email campuscare@newcastle.edu.au or by making an appointment with Campus Care (02) 4921 8600.

2. Formal report
   • You can make a formal report of sexual misconduct to the University if the alleged perpetrator is, or was, a student or staff member, or if the assault happened on campus or at a University event.
   • This may initiate a formal assessment by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).
   • The accused may be disciplined under the Student Conduct Rule.
   • This does not initiate a police investigation.

REPORTING TO NSW POLICE

3. Informal report
   • You may provide information anonymously, or with a request that it is not formally investigated.
   • This information can be used to help police protect the community.
   • This can be done either in person, by attending a police station, or by completing an online form called the Sexual Assault Reporting Option (SARO). You can find the form by heading to police.nsw.gov.au and searching ‘SARO’.
   • This can be used at a later date as part of a formal report.

4. Formal report
   • You can provide information to NSW Police and request that the matter is formally investigated.
   • This involves speaking about the assault in detail to provide police with a statement.
   • It may be suggested that you attend a local hospital to complete a Sexual Assault Investigation Kit (SAIK; also known as a ‘forensic medical examination’). This is not mandatory.
   • It is recommended to call ahead to make an appointment to speak with a detective based within sexual assault investigation team. Campus Care can assist with this process.
The University of Newcastle takes all allegations of misconduct seriously – including allegations of sexually based assault and harassment.

Behaviour that compromises the safety and wellbeing of students or staff will not be tolerated.

- You are able to request to speak to a male or female officer, or to speak with specialist staff such as the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (“GLLO”), Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Multicultural Liaison Officer or Domestic Violence Liaison Officer.
- You are able to bring a support person with you.
- Offenders may be arrested and charged under Australian law following a criminal investigation.
- If the matter goes to court, you may be required to attend. Legal support during the court proceedings may be available through NSW Police.
- NSW Health Sexual Assault Services can provide support and information about police investigation and court processes – www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/sexualassault/Pages/health-sas-services.aspx

WHAT IS A SAIK / FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAM

- A Sexual Assault Investigation Kit (SAIK) is used to conduct a forensic medical examination to collect physical evidence of the assault.
- It involves a specialist medical doctor conducting a physical examination to collect evidence to build a legal case. This may include collecting swabs or taking photographs.
- You do not have to be physically injured for a medical examination to take place and gather useful evidence.
- To collect the best evidence, a forensic medical exam should take place as soon as possible, ideally within seven days of the assault.
- You can have a ‘just in case’ medical examination, and then decide at a later date if you wish to proceed with the police examination. If you decide not to proceed with a report, the SAIK will be destroyed.
- You can decide that you do not want to have a forensic medical examination.
- If you decide to proceed with a forensic medical examination, try not to wash or change clothes until forensic evidence has been collected. If you need to bathe before going to hospital, take the clothes you were wearing, as well as any personal items you had at the time of the assault with you.

I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO. HOW DO I DECIDE?

The decision about whether to make a report is important, but is often made at a time of crisis and extreme stress. The option you choose may depend on factors such as where the incident occurred and what you would like the outcome to be. Some common barriers to making a report include fear of not being believed, feelings of guilt or shame about the assault, feeling responsible in some way for the assault occurring, concerns about privacy, fear of the perpetrator, wanting to protect the perpetrator, fear of the court process, or limited knowledge about what the process of reporting will involve.

If you are unsure or confused about the options, it can be helpful to talk to a professional who can help you to clarify which is the right option for you.

You could talk to a professional at:

- Your local sexual assault clinic
- NSW Rape Crisis Line – 1800 424 017, 24 hrs
- Counselling and Psychological Services – (02) 4921 6622
- Campus Care – (02) 4921 8600
- The University of Newcastle After-Hours Crisis Support Line (5pm-9am weekdays, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays) – 1300 653 007 or text 0488 884 165