Annual Report 2023

RMIT wellbeing

Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan

(2020-2025)

Introduction

The Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025 (the Plan) is a longitudinal, systematic, and evidence-informed approach to creating a mentally healthy work and study culture across RMIT. This is the third annual report published, and the third year of the delivery of the Plan.

As the Plan is data-driven and evidence-based, we track our performance each year against a formal evaluation framework. The Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety team implements evidence-based mental health promotion action including programs, training, activations, responsive work encompassing 1-1 check-ins and manager support, and psychosocial risk-related action planning. These activities are driven by insights from RMIT's annual Mental Wellbeing Survey. This annual report is produced to ensure these activities continue to meet the desired outcomes and impacts over both shorter and longer terms.
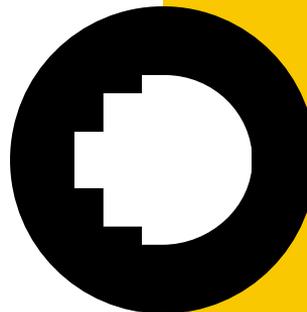
The Plan contributes to RMIT's commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, it represents strategic action towards SDG3 to "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." Our focus on partnerships is also aligned with SDG17 to "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".

Contents

"Together we create a mentally healthy community in which everyone can realise their potential and feel safe and supported in their experience of mental wellbeing."

PART 1

**Acknowledgement of Country
Foreword
Executive Summary**

Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

RMIT recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the proud custodians of Earth's longest surviving cultures. The value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional ways of wellbeing are evidenced by the resilience and resourcefulness in the face of colonisation and unjust attempts to destroy their cultures or force assimilation.

RMIT acknowledges the importance of history and culture in in understanding and promoting social and emotional wellbeing. The University values cultural diversity, believes all staff and students should be treated with dignity and respect, and seeks to contribute to creating a nation that provides equal life chances for all and works in collaboration with its Indigenous heritage.

Bundjil's statement

Bundjil Womin Djeka ngarna-ga – Bundjil asks you to come and asks what is your purpose for coming and understanding

Bundjil was a powerful man, who travelled as an Eagle. He was the head man of the Kulin people. Bundjil taught us to always welcome guests. Bundjil asks what is your purpose for coming and understanding place.

When you are on place you make dhumbali (promise / commitment) to Bundjil and the land of the Kulin Nation.

The first dhumbali, is to obey the ngarn-ga (understandings) of Bundjil.

The second dhumbali, is to not harm the bubups (children).

The third is not to harm the biik biik (land) and wurneet (waterways) of Bundjil.

As the spirit of Kulin ancestors live in us, let the wisdom, the spirit and the generosity in which Bundjil taught us influence the decisions made on place. Do this by understanding your ways of knowing, your ways of doing, and your ways of being on place.

Artwork *Luwaytini* by Mark Cleaver, Palawa

RMIT's Code of Conduct is grounded in the principles of Bundjil's Statement. This aims to send a signal about how RMIT interprets the conditions of 'Welcome' and of living respectfully on the lands of the Kulin Nations. As the University's foundational policy document, the Code of Conduct demonstrates the University's dhumbali to embedding reconciliation in everything we do.

RMIT wellbeing

Foreword

Bridgid Connors
Chief People Officer

I am pleased to present the third Mental Wellbeing Annual Report for RMIT, as we continue to work on implementing our whole-of-community Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan.

This report highlights the progress and challenges of generating a mentally healthy university culture – requiring a collaborative effort between our Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) team and teams across our RMIT community. In the following report, you will read about projects and initiatives across the continuum of wellbeing – from mental health promotion and prevention through to early intervention, enhancing supports, and responsive work.

Our core principles of mental health and wellbeing promotion are:

(i)   strengthening community action through supported bespoke action planning
(ii)   developing personal skills through capability framework development and opportunities for learning and growing
(iii)   building policy through launching procedures and policies around psychosocial risk and relationship safety
(iv)   creating supportive environments through on-campus activations and conversations
(v)   advocating for health and wellbeing through presentations and research, and
(vi)   strengthening supports through our complex case support and suicide prevention work

These wellbeing initiatives are delivered alongside the range of additional local area approaches led by our Colleges and Portfolios through ongoing commitment and compassionate leadership.

Together, we continue to work to create environments where staff and students can thrive. I acknowledge and express my gratitude to everyone across the RMIT community for embodying the guiding principle of shared responsibility in creating and maintaining an integrated approach to mental wellbeing.

As we carry out this work of improving mental wellbeing across RMIT, we continue to refine our approaches to psychosocial risk action planning. This calls for a systems-based approach, reviewing both lead and lag indicators that help us to make informed decisions. Workplace factors that impact our emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing are complex, multilayered, and often have no one-size-fits-all solution. This work requires collaboration and participation. It also asks us to deepen our understanding of psychosocial risks, adopt a curious 'lifelong' learning mindset, and facilitate trust in our relationships. These are important enablers for respectful and robust conversations that lay the groundwork for effective, long-term solutions.

Community-wide efforts to improve mental health and wellbeing are not without their challenges. However, I am confident that we, as a community throughout RMIT, can collectively surmount the challenges and further our efforts to build the best environments possible for our staff and students to work and study in – where people can feel safe, have a voice and thrive.

I look forward to continuing the great work together and seeing what opportunities come next.

Executive summary

This is the third Annual Report for the Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025, which integrates action on both student and staff mental wellbeing.

The Plan consists of a Vision, the "Why", Guiding Principles, Key Action Areas, and Enablers to ensure a systematic, values-driven and broad-based approach to mental health and wellbeing.

This report was compiled by the Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety (WPS) team. WPS are a specialist team established within the Health, Safety and Wellbeing area of Operations to deliver all aspects of RMIT's Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan.

This Annual Report outlines how RMIT is continuing to "shift the dial" of mental wellbeing towards mental health promotion and prevention. The Key Action Areas are aligned with external frameworks for student and staff mental health and wellbeing, and the Plan helps RMIT maintain our commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2023, the Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety team was formed. This brought together the previous Staff Wellbeing and Mental Wellbeing Initiatives teams to streamline processes, strengthen communication and collaboration, and improve fidelity of support. The new team is better situated to meet needs throughout the RMIT community in terms of wellbeing and psychosocial safety – grounded within an approach that is guided by multiple kinds of evidence.

2023 saw us continue our steps in improving mental health and wellbeing – including the introduction of a Ways of WellBeing model throughout RMIT. To address psychosocial risk, we partnered with a new EAP provider (Converge International), identified issues, and developed and implemented programs and projects to reduce risks. Our work included 262 wellbeing check-in call referrals with more than 300 support appointments, as well as the delivery of a wide range of training and capacity-building offerings for staff and students at RMIT.

We also continued psychosocial risk action planning with Schools and Portfolios. This work

included: reviewing results from the Mental Wellbeing Survey and from the Staff Engagement Survey; convening and working with local area working groups to review risks and controls; and developing additional controls – where needed – to help build a safer, more supportive workplace environment.

Through our 2023 Mental Wellbeing Survey, we found that RMIT's Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) remains at "medium" risk. Broadly, we have seen a decline in PSC since 2022 – but we have also seen an improvement in mental wellbeing at the RMIT community level. Levels of workload, incivility, and unfairness all remain concerningly high. We continue to prioritise our responses to these complex issues.

In tandem, we need to continue providing support and training for leaders and managers across RMIT. This is crucial for enabling them to improve wellbeing and psychosocial safety within their local areas. As this work builds, we hope to see more wellbeing-focused workplace environments more broadly throughout the University.

Finally, in this report, we spotlight some local initiatives led across a variety of work areas at RMIT. This helps to re-iterate that mental health and wellbeing is a shared responsibility for all.

Our vision:
"Shifting the dial"

WE'RE HERE NOW

PROTECT

WE'LL GET HERE

WE BEGAN HERE

RMIT is currently rated as a **"medium risk"** organisation. Most of our efforts and energies are focused at the "Systems" level but, with continued work and investment, we plan to shift the dial further into the Culture and MH promotion zone of activity.

PROMOTE

RESPOND
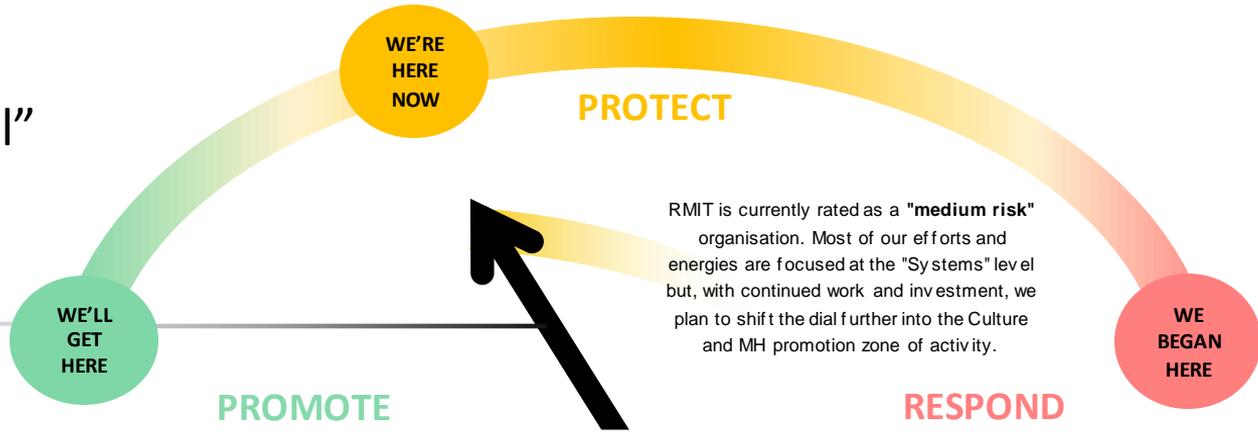
Timing of interventions	Long-term proactive	Short-term proactive	Present-focused	Early reactive	Late reactive
Definitions	A fully mature culture of mental health promotion addresses the root causes of mental ill-health by also building potential for human flourishing.	Mental health promotion activities tackle systems that drive organisational and work- or study-related risk and protective factors.	Resilience is targeted to prevent mental ill-health and some limited mental health promotion activities implemented.	People are offered more timely support but there is little investment in upstream promotion and prevention activities.	People tend to only receive support when they need urgent care or to assist their recovery.
Examples	Psychosocial Safety Climate Mental Wellbeing Action Planning Campaigns	Psychosocial risk management Learning pathways Survey, evaluation framework, and local area action planning	Training, webinars, workshops etc. Capability framework Enhancing civility and reducing burnout	Suicide prevention Assisting Others in Distress training	Optimising services Critical Incident Management (incl. Sudden Death Response Team)
How we measure progress	Rates of flourishing among students and staff	Levels of psychosocial risk	Engagement	Exhaustion	Service usage rates, wait times and satisfaction levels

About the Mental Wellbeing Survey 2023

In 2023, the Mental Wellbeing survey was administered mid-August in partnership with researchers in the School of Property, Construction, and Project Management.

In this survey, we asked participants four main things (items in Appendix):

1. Their view on RMIT's **Psychosocial Safety Climate** (i.e., what they think about RMIT's general approach to supporting mental wellbeing)
2. Their own **positive mental wellbeing** (i.e., not symptoms of mental ill-health like depression, anxiety or distress)
3. How **engaged or exhausted** their work or study makes them feel, and
4. Experiences of **psychosocial risk factors** informed by anticipated legislation requirements

> **In 2023, participant numbers across all onshore RMIT included:**
> 1651 current staff (27% response rate)*
> 783 current students (1% response rate)

Note: Previously-reported response rates included casual staff in the denominator, and so this response rate seems higher than previous years.

What is Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)?

Psychosocial safety climate is a property of an organisation. It is reflected in the organisational policies, practises and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety. Evidence strongly suggests that enhancing PSC can:

- Increase positive outcomes (e.g. learning, social connectedness, healthy behaviours)
- Reduce negative outcomes (e.g. bullying, depression/anxiety, physical health conditions).

PSC is a lead indicator – meaning we can use PSC data to help forecast future patterns and trends in psychosocial safety at RMIT. It is measured using the Psychosocial Safety Climate-4, an instrument consisting of 4 questions that measure different dimensions of RMIT's climate:

- Organisational communication
- Organisational participation
- Senior management commitment
- Senior management priority

What are psychosocial factors?

Psychosocial Factors are areas of risk that can impact wellness at work/study.

Items were included in response to requests from leaders and mental wellbeing action plan working groups for more local-area data about specific risks.

We chose 7, based on the Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work, proposed Victorian psychological health regulations, and our knowledge of what impacts people most at RMIT.

- Workload
- Bullying and harassment
- Civility and respect
- Fairness
- Traumatic content or experiences
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Violence and aggression

We asked three questions about each Psychosocial Factor:

1. Is it an issue in your area?
2. How frequently does it occur?
3. What is the impact on wellbeing?

RMIT wellbeing

# Evidence: Tracking progress and outcomes

Summary

Performance metrics 2023 v 2022: PSC risk level is the same (Medium) although average PSC score worsened significantly among staff. Mental wellbeing also improved significantly among staff, although this remains at medium level on average. Engagement remained unchanged.

Psychosocial factors: Perceptions of workload as a stressor were universally high. There were three out of seven "Low" exposure ratings for staff, and five out of seven for students. Perceptions of bullying and (Un)Fairness were also elevated for staff.

Staff: Many measures were typically poorer in Colleges compared to Portfolios (e.g., "High" versus "Low" PSC risk). College staff – both Professional and Academic alike – experienced higher levels of perceived bullying, incivility and unfairness than Portfolio staff.

	Metric	All staff n=1,651	All students n=783
Performance metrics Coloured text indicates significant improvement (**green**) or deterioration (**red**) since 2022	PSC risk	**Medium**	Medium
	Exhaustion	Medium	Medium
	Mental wellbeing	**Medium**	Medium
Psychosocial factors (Exposure ratings from Low to Critical) Coloured text indicates significant improvement (**green**) or deterioration (**red**) since 2022	Workload	High	High
	(In)Civility	**High**	Low
	Bullying	Medium	Low
	Trauma	Low	Low
	Violence	Low	Low
	(Un)Fairness	High	**Medium**
	Sexual harm	Low	Low
Overall	Concern level	**Medium**	**Medium**

RMIT wellbeing

2023 timeline of key events

JAN
- Staff learning pathways project gap analysis completed
- Student learning pathways project plan and funding proposal completed

FEB
- Commenced data dashboard for Mental Wellbeing survey
- Action planning process finalised with joined up approach with Staff Engagement
- Student Orientation events

MAR
- Training sessions delivered
- Sudden Death Response Team process improvements
- Peer support pilot program design commenced

APR
- Ways to WellBeing soft launch

MAY
- University Mental Health Day campaign and events to celebrate play
- 2022 Annual Report released

JUN
- Peer support pilot program launch
- Targeted wellbeing workshops delivered in VE Business and Enterprise

JUL
- Ethics approval for Mental Wellbeing survey
- New leadership training pilot

AUG
- 3rd annual Mental Wellbeing Survey
- Suicide prevention training
- Social media campaign for students on safe conversations

SEP
- RUOK? Day supports and events
- Wrap up of pilot SCORE program in School of Computing Technologies

OCT
- Mental Health Month activities
- Mental Wellbeing survey data presented at VCE, College and School level
- Staff Wellbeing Expo

NOV
- Capability uplift continued with staff training offerings and strong participation
- Commenced student complex case management project

DEC
- Wellbeing initiatives offered to staff e.g. massage program

RMIT wellbeing

PART 2

Report on action areas

How did we perform in 2023?

Over the length of the Plan, our aim is to build a thorough evaluation over successive reports from year to year.

Quantifying outcomes and impact takes time, so this report will highlight baseline measures of Mental Wellbeing Initiatives and their contribution to implementing the Plan throughout 2023.

The Strategic Action Plan will be assessed according to three types of evaluation: process, outcome, and impact.

1. **Process** evaluation describes what was implemented and how successful it was in terms of raw numbers and qualitative feedback.

2. **Outcome** evaluation focuses on whether the implemented activity had the desired effect in the short term and in a specific domain.

3. **Impact** evaluation asks whether the processes and outcomes had more general effects over the long term.

In 2023, the focus was on the collection of follow-up outcome and impact data in addition to continued collection of process data. We have made consistent progress towards implementing each of the activities listed in the Strategic Action Plan's Evaluation Framework and Logic Model.

Illustrating progress in this report

Each Key Action Area and specific action is marked to illustrate progress towards completion or level of ongoing activity. Activities are coded as "Yes" if complete / in-place, "Partial" if in-progress or some work achieved, or "Not yet" if not started.

Not implemented
Means yet to begin

Partially implemented
Means incomplete or in development

Fully implemented
Means complete or continuing

RMIT wellbeing

Our commitment

Articulate our commitment

Advocacy for inclusion of mental wellbeing in key university strategy documents. YES

Support senior leaders to articulate their commitment to prioritising mental wellbeing at RMIT. YES

Launch our Action Plan. YES

Our way

Collaborate for collective impact

Develop whole of community engagement model for staff and students to be co-creators of mental wellbeing initiatives. NOT YET

Develop governance structures to foster collaboration with RMIT academics and researchers. YES

Foster opportunities for RMIT students' collaboration with RMIT Wellbeing. LIMITED

Our stories

Grow meaningful engagement and tell our stories

Deliver tailored whole of community mental health promotion and stigma reduction campaigns. YES

Consultation with RMIT Academics, staff and students with a lived experience of mental ill-health. PARTIAL

Support staff and students to share their lived experiences in safe ways that support our commitment to reduce stigma of mental ill-health. PARTIAL

Our growth

Learn, celebrate and share our success

Develop the Action Plan Evaluation Framework, including program Logic. YES

Produce publications and conference presentations showcasing Action Plan initiatives. YES

Create strategic partnerships with other universities. YES

Overall progress

RMIT wellbeing

Key action area #1

—

Culture

Actualising collective value on care, collaboration, health and wellbeing, so that both groups and individuals thrive in work and learning

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Key initiatives

Student Orientation & Welcome Events

RMIT Wellbeing supported orientation and welcome events for Higher Education and Vocational Education students – including delivery of engaging activities, promotion of students' completion of the Mental Wellbeing Essentials learning module, and provision of information about services and supports available as part of student life. In total, approximately 8000 students engaged with activations across all campuses. Over 200 students took part in our 'Ways of WellBeing' activity – contributing their own ideas or suggestions of ways to support positive wellbeing among themselves and others.

University Mental Health Day

We delivered a mental health and wellbeing promotion campaign to acknowledge University Mental Health Day. Delivered online to maximise reach and impact, this campaign introduced students to RMIT's '5 Ways of WellBeing' model. Online and video content reached over 38,000 students via social media and RMIT online platforms.

Staff Wellbeing Expo

This year, we held the Staff Wellbeing Expo at the Bundoora, City, and Brunswick campuses. Featuring stalls from key RMIT service areas and partner organisations, this was a space created to support staff in prioritising their personal wellbeing. Stalls offered information, giveaways, and playful opportunities for staff to care for and build their mental health and wellbeing. Activities also enabled staff to learn about the services available to them as an RMIT employee. A total of 507 staff attended across the events.

RMIT wellbeing

Key initiatives

R U OK? Day

R U OK? Day initiatives focused on connected to the origins and purpose of the R U OK? charity – suicide prevention through meaningful connection and conversation. Initiatives focused on promoting and strengthening protective factors against suicide – building capacity for meaningful connection, enhancing a sense of belonging, and creating space for meaningful conversations.

For staff, we ran three iterations of Safe Conversation – Suicide Prevention training across the week, with approximately 50 staff members attending to build their capacity to recognise when someone may be at risk and engage in a safe and meaningful conversation with someone they have concerns for. On R U OK? Day, we partnered with onsite cafés and provided connecting conversation prompts for a coffee and connection activity. Approximately 352 staff members meet with a colleague to have a connecting conversation over a free coffee across our City, Bundoora, and Brunswick campuses.

For students, we developed a video which was shared on Instagram and Facebook to inspire them to take the time to listen and have meaningful conversations with their peers and families. The Facebook post was the top post on that channel in September with 2,376 views, and the Instagram post had a reach of 3631 and 209 reactions. On the student website, we had 515 views, the second highest for the month. A newsletter article was also sent to all students that featured how taking the time to genuinely listen makes a difference, attracting 182 clicks.

RMIT
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Our policies

Review and uplift our policies and procedures

Create a plan, process action plan and consultation process for suicide prevention approach. YES

Our responsibilities

Identify, address and monitor key psychosocial risks

Enhance process for identifying, addressing and monitoring psychosocial risks. YES

Develop a planned approach and consultation process to develop resources for local/program level psychosocial safety management. YES

Our systems

Influence key organisational system levers in teaching, research and work

Embed key mental wellbeing information (e.g., model for wellbeing, key supports) into student curriculum. PARTIAL

Embed mental wellbeing as a key consideration of RMIT research. YES

Embed key mental wellbeing information (e.g. model for wellbeing, key supports) into staff programs. YES

Strategic communications plan for whole of community to embed mental wellbeing messages. PARTIAL

Uplift influential groups, networks and leaders including HSW, champions networks, advisory groups. YES

Overall progress

Key action area #2

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Systems

Evaluating the links between the way people work and study, the prevalence of psychosocial risk, and the rates of psychosocial injury

RMIT
wellbeing

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Key initiatives

Psychosocial risk management

In 2023, we commenced psychosocial risk action planning. In this process, we use data and findings from the annual Mental Wellbeing Survey to guide local area-level working groups to (i) identify and review their specific areas of psychosocial risk, and (ii) develop control measures that aim to reduce the risks identified. This work is carried out in partnership with local area HSW committees and with People Partners.

Systems for responding to suicide and other sudden deaths

A cross-university multidisciplinary team is the core of our expanded suicide postvention response, which now activates following any sudden death in our community. This Sudden Death Response Team is now integrated into existing processes for critical incident management, and templates and guidelines have been developed to allow timely responding and resourcing. Feedback across the university has been positive in terms of the level of support individuals and local areas when a death occurs.

Student safety measures and complex case management

A bi-weekly case management meeting has been established by the Students group. This involves stakeholders from across service areas including Student Welfare, Student Counselling, Equitable Learning Services, Safer Community, and Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety. This is an opportunity for cases to be discussed, with a focus on complex cases where a student might be involved with multiple services, have escalating behaviour, or demonstrate something emerging that is of concern. This more coordinated approach seeks to ensure better and clearer communication, reductions in duplicated effort, and more comprehensive support.

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wellbeing

Our knowledge

Build the mental health capability and literacy of our community
Develop a model for promoting mental wellbeing. YES
Provide mental health promotion and literacy through various comms channels. YES
Develop a mental wellbeing skills capability and resilience framework. YES

Our skills

Increase capabilities to assist others in distress and look after own wellbeing
Student and staff training in assisting students/others in distress. YES
Source and/or deliver skills specific training around self-care, supporting others, and resilience. YES

Our resources

Provide tools to proactively build psychological safety and resilience
Develop staff and student engagement plan to share our resources and support implementation. YES
Resources are made readily available, easy to access, download and implement. YES
Explore digital mental health promotion tools that offer scale and impact. PARTIAL

Our environments

Create physical and online environments that foster mental wellbeing, engagement, and access
Develop online spaces for Champions groups and Communities of Practice collaboration. YES
Strengthen online channels for wellbeing skills e.g. Facebook, Yammer. YES
Enhance access to online resources, online architecture and website uplift. YES

Overall progress

Key action area #3

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Skills and Experiences

Evaluating the links between mental health promotion activities, psychosocial protective factors, and the emotional and psychological wellbeing of staff and students

RMIT wellbeing

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Key initiatives

Toward a new model for promoting mental health and wellbeing at RMIT

As a university, we are building a culture and community of care – one that fosters positive mental health and wellbeing. Each of us have a role in looking after our own and each other's wellbeing, but we recognise that sometimes it can be hard to pinpoint where to start.

To assist individuals to take meaningful action to improve their wellbeing, we introduced a model for promoting mental health and wellbeing throughout the RMIT University community.

The **Five Ways to Wellbeing** model was developed by the New Economics Foundation in 2008, following extensive research into behaviours that protect, maintain, and help to improve mental health and wellbeing. The model was soft-launched to staff and students through various online channels, with integration into existing wellbeing resources and offerings, to assess acceptability and relevance to RMIT.

In partnership with Student Life, the original model was reviewed and re-conceptualised to better suit RMIT's unique work and study environments. Our adapted model – **RMIT's six Ways of WellBeing** – now features an additional factor (or 'way') in the model, broadened options for action, and revised language and phrasing to encourage ongoing action. The artwork on the left-hand side of this page shows the five ways originally conceived by the New Economics Foundation.

In 2024, our focus will be on bringing RMIT's Ways of Wellbeing to life by socialising a new visual identity, along with official launch and implementation of the model across the University in a variety of contexts and settings.

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Key initiatives

Strengthening training and professional development

New training offerings were developed for staff and leaders to offer a tiered training approach to enhance capability and confidence in supporting wellbeing and psychosocial safety. Approximately 650 staff members and 320 students attended one of the 28 wellbeing training sessions delivered throughout the year, including newly developed offerings for staff and leaders such as: (i) Trauma Informed Teaching and Learning, (ii) Fostering Sustainable Wellbeing, and (iii) Self-Care for Leaders and Leading for Wellbeing.

Building capability through healthy teams

Wellbeing partnered with Culture & Inclusion to deliver wellbeing training workshops under their team-based staff initiative – the Healthy Teams (Pilot) Program. In recognition of the pivotal role that health, safety and wellbeing capability plays in enabling a culture of care, a selection of wellbeing workshops were featured as core elements within the program. Throughout the Healthy Teams pilot, five wellbeing workshops were delivered to over 60 staff members and leaders, across the three participating teams.

Leader Induction Program

We know that it is crucial to equip our leaders to successfully protect, promote and support a mentally healthy RMIT and contribute to a culture of care. Through this training program we were able to provide key information to our new leaders in an engaging, collaborative 3-hour session. We delivered several sessions in collaboration with the Organisational Development team and supported many leaders new to RMIT. This helps to build a strong foundation for continuing to prioritise psychosocial safety and wellbeing through leadership.

RMIT wellbeing

Our model

Promote initiatives that support personal mental wellbeing
Offer wellbeing initiatives connected to the wellbeing model. YES
Student focused events, such as Orientation, wellbeing support during assessments, Calm Zone for exams. YES
Staff focused events, such as wellbeing sessions, individual wellbeing professional development and training. YES

Shift the dial

Develop prevention initiatives to support early action
Use data to inform area and population specific prevention initiatives (e.g. enhanced peer support options, promotion of EAP). YES
Collaborate to review and create plan for best practice for prevention, with attention to tailoring for target populations (e.g., international students). PARTIAL

Our supports

Optimise our services and supports to those in need
Quality improvement initiatives in student and staff support services (e.g., student support, ELS, and EAP). **PARTIAL**
Injury Management Team optimise return to work processes. **YES**

Prevent, prepare, respond

Strengthen our suicide prevention and postvention protocols and processes
Support the development of the headspace postvention toolkit for the sector. YES
Review of RMIT's current approaches. YES
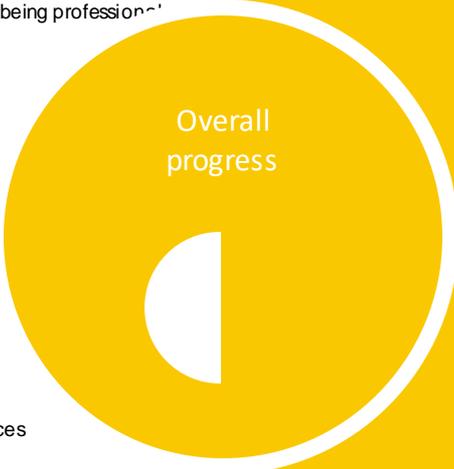
Overall progress

RMIT wellbeing

Key action area #4

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Supports

Evaluating the links between a continuum of wellbeing supports, upstream service enhancement, and improvement of downstream services

Key initiatives

Integrated wellbeing support for staff

Two Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety Partner positions commenced in 2023. The purpose of these roles is to provide comprehensive support through a partnering model. Their key responsibilities include:

- Staff wellbeing check-ins
- Leader coaching and advice
- Psychosocial risk action planning
- Facilitating staff training

Peer Support Program

In 2023 we launched the Peer Support Pilot in 9 program areas. Peer Supporters are volunteers who have undertaken two full days of training to gain accreditation to provide support to colleagues, along with participating in ongoing supervision and professional development. We trained 48 peer supporters, and there are currently 43 active peer supporters. We held 8 drop-in sessions and 2 formal supervision sessions.

New EAP Provider: Converge

Converge offers comprehensive support services tailored to the needs of RMIT staff members including:

- Free confidential counselling sessions with qualified professionals to assist with personal and/or work-related issues.
- A wide range of resources including online tools, workshops, and monthly Flourish Magazine to promote well-being and resilience among staff members.
- Specialist helplines including first nations, LGBTQIA+, manager assist
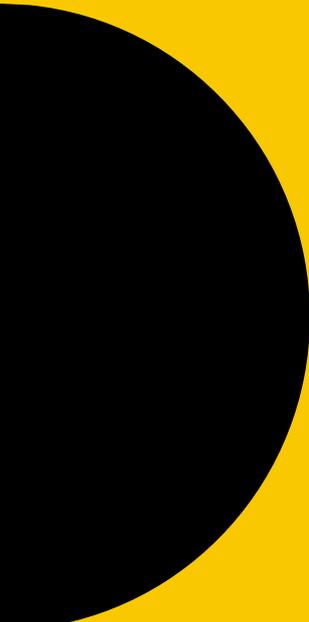
RMIT
wellbeing

PART 3

Highlights across RMIT

RMIT wellbeing

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Curricular change: Social Care and Health

In 2023, RMIT introduced a new Social Care and Health program in VE, a pre-requisite of which is for students to have personal and/or carer experience with respect to mental ill-health.

Managing the complexity of students drawing on their lived experience while engaging in challenging curricula highlighted a significant opportunity to implement strategies to ensure a safe learning and teaching environment. Interventions have included:

— Embedding risk management strategies within the curriculum.

— Reviewing course content and adjusting for safety.

— Advising on structuring session to include safety and containment reminders.

— Building capacity for teachers in managing mental health disclosures.

— Development of Safe Sharing guidelines for students.

— Building help-seeking and psychosocial safety with students.

What are some examples of practice change?

Support for teaching staff:

- Fortnightly wellbeing drop-in session

- Warm referral pathway through to Senior Advisor Student Complex Case Manager

- Tailored training from Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety Team

Support for students:

- Face-to-face presentation from Student Counselling and Student Welfare Advisors and Safer Community

- Safe Sharing guidelines

Many of these changes will continue in 2024 to help improve and sustain students' and staff members' safety and wellbeing.

RMIT
wellbeing

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Strengthening suicide prevention and response

Partnership to build staff and student capacity

A member of the WPS team was invited to participate in an expert advisory panel, working jointly with Universities Australia and Suicide Prevention Australia to develop a package of e-learning modules on suicide prevention for delivery with staff and students in Australian universities. These modules form part of the operationalisation of a wider competency framework, which was released in February 2022.

Having recently been launched, the e-learning package is mainly focused on building knowledge, skills, and confidence among university staff – but it is also suitable for students (and particularly student leaders). It comprises four modules:

1. Safe communication
2. Warning signs, risk and protective factors
3. Responding to someone in distress
4. Self-care

SUICIDE PREVENTION:
A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK
FOR UNIVERSITIES

February 2022 UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA   Suicide Prevention Australia

ANZSSA 2023: Sector-wide knowledge-building

In 2023, our team continued the important work of enhancing our understanding and approach to suicide prevention and sudden death response.

A pivotal engagement was partnering with RMIT Student Support who attended the 2023 Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) Conference, where we participated in an expert panel session on sudden death response. Our contribution not only allowed us to share insights and learnings, but also enabled us to gather invaluable knowledge from experts who are working alongside universities in this critical field.

We also presented a comprehensive discussion paper on the effectiveness of our team's efforts in supporting both staff and students, emphasising the imperative of embedding considered and effective suicide prevention strategies into our approach. This experience served as a catalyst for refining our practices and reaffirming our commitment to supporting mental wellbeing at RMIT.

RMIT wellbeing

ANZSSA Conference 2023

Wednesday 18 October – Friday 20 October
Western Sydney University,
Peter Shergold Building, Parramatta Campus

Civility program: School of Computing Technologies

Civility is more than just politeness. It's about seeking common ground, respecting differences, and understanding personal preconceptions.

The SCORE program – developed by Steople in partnership with Deakin University – focuses on increasing civility, improving relationships, increasing engagement and productivity, and reducing rates of absenteeism. Its overall purpose is to create a positive workplace by increasing the proportion of civil and supportive social encounters, enabling workgroups to express themselves and lean into robust discussions with respect.

SCORE is a facilitated group process. Workgroups implement SCORE themselves – SCORE is not done *to* a workgroup. It is delivered by a SCORE facilitator who leads them through the process, with the internal co-facilitator supporting the workgroup between each session by helping to embed agreed changes into new daily habits.

The program consists of five two-hour sessions, spaced around a month apart.

SCORE specifically aims to:

— Build behaviours that best support operational requirements
— Give team members the skills to effectively communicate with each other
— Develop strategies to have constructive conversations
— Build capability to call out unhelpful cultural norms and address the issues in a positive way
— Work with each other to create a positive workplace culture
— Build confidence to address difficult issues with peers and co-workers
— Develop positive relationships between co-workers

In 2023, SCORE was implemented on a pilot basis with all research fellows and staff in the School of Computing Technologies at RMIT.

The outcomes of pilot program delivery were positive with good feedback from participants about both structure and content.

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Suicide prevention with VE

RMIT is committed to suicide prevention and is implementing effective evidence-based strategies to reduce risk of suicide and the harm it may cause to staff, students, and the broader community.

Sadly, 2023 saw the tragic loss of 3 of RMIT's VE trades students to suicide. Our Sudden Death Response Team provided effective postvention support utilising relevant risk frameworks including suicide contagion and psychosocial safety models. This involved closely with staff and leaders in the Trades area to ensure a compassionate and safe response. It also led to being able to gather important information – including on the window of vulnerability for Trades students which emerged soon after they had completed their official studies with us and prior to sitting their Journeyman's exam.

Due to the close proximity (geographically, socially, and psychologically) of the sudden deaths in the Trades area, as well as static risk factors, our team identified the need for a timely and comprehensive Suicide Prevention Plan. This plan was developed, implemented and monitored by the Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety Team.

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Priority in plan	What was done?
Community partnerships	• Guest speakers from Worksafe Victoria provided information sessions for students, focussed on destigmatising mental health concerns and affirming the importance of help seeking pathways • Collaboration with HALT (Mental Health Support for Tradies) • Workshops
Student support	• Extension of RMIT support: Counselling and Psychological Services made available for an additional 6 months for Trades students to support a period of greater vulnerability – after completing their official studies with RMIT and prior to completing their Journeyman's – including priority appointments. • Psychoeducation and capacity-building: Training on suicide prevention, efforts to de-stigmatise mental health issues and encourage help seeking, and reinforcement of supports available. • Activities to build connections and relationships: Regular free lunch time BBQ on campus for Trades staff and students, with resources provided on free community mental health supports.
Staff support	• Psychological support: On-site counselling by EAP provider, regular check-ins with staff led by WPS team, and coaching support for leaders in recognising risk factors and supporting staff. • Psychoeducation and capacity-building: Training on safe conversations in suicide prevention, caring for self and others, and services available.

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Walk This May: College of Business and Law

Initially developed to help bolster team morale and connection during the Melbourne lockdowns, in 2023 the Walk this May Initiative saw over 500 steppers participate across all RMIT campuses and sites.

Walk This May is an annual in-house step challenge, open to all staff at RMIT University, designed as a wellbeing initiative developed and run by the College of Business and Law (COBL) for the past 4 years.

In teams of 7, staff compete to be at the top of the leaderboard and crowned Walk This May champions. Staff can enter individually and be matched up with stepping colleagues. Alternatively, staff can collectivise and enter as a full team of 7.

As well as the step challenge, teams can engage in mini challenges that draw on a range of skills, both physical and artistic, and encourage participants to step outside of their comfort zone and try something new.

What are the benefits of Walk This May?

- **Supporting physical health and wellbeing:** The challenge is designed to be as inclusive as possible – with no minimum step count and, instead, a focus on encouraging staff to participate at a level that works for them.

- **Supporting connections and relationships:** Mini-challenges present opportunities to support socialisation and relationship-building among RMIT staff, with bonus points awarded for staff collaboration across multiple parts of the University.

- **Inspiring new habits for wellbeing:** The challenge aims to support staff in trying new activities or exploring their creative side.

- **Ongoing benefits:** Participant feedback suggests that Walk This May has inspired some RMIT staff to get out and about in their local neighbourhoods, with small positive changes toward better personal health – both physically and mentally.

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Student-led wellbeing event for R U OK? Day

In 2023, RUSU, Compass, and the STEM College co-led an R U OK? Day event for Bundoora students. The aim was to facilitate a sense of belonging through new friendships and social connection.

The R U OK event promoted visibility of RMIT and RUSU support services, including Student Counselling, Compass, welfare assistance programs, and wellbeing webinars.

Approximately 400 students attended the event where they were able to create their own wellbeing tea bags and were provided with ceramic coffee cups. Students were also encouraged to participate in RU OK activities and received coffee cards for participation.

What did the event involve?

- Bringing students together over lunch and activities.

- Supporting students' engagement in conversations and activities that aim to improve social interaction, friendships, and support networks – all key to reducing stress, increasing happiness, and bolstering overall life satisfaction.

- Creating a supportive environment in which students could feel comfortable sharing and seeking help if needed.

- Offering free food as one means of providing temporary relief for students from financial pressures.

RMIT wellbeing

PART 4

What's next …

RMIT wellbeing
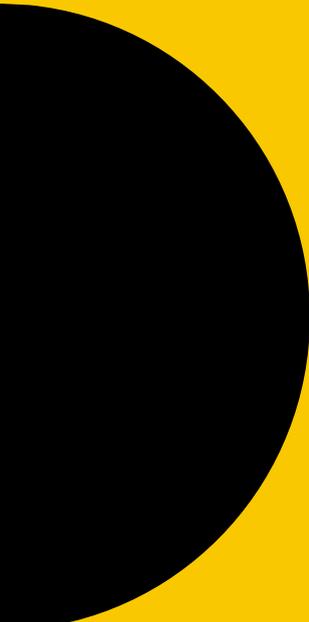
Our three areas of focus for 2024

1. Strengthening collaboration

Working together across Colleges and Portfolios is critical – including for our psychosocial risk action planning and for providing effective support for both individuals and teams across RMIT. This includes the establishment of new models for complex case management to improve communication and cohesive action across multiple areas of the University – ultimately aiming to ensure nobody "falls through the cracks" and everybody has access to support. Collaboration will also be critical as we launch RMIT's new Ways of WellBeing model at scale, seeking to help build shared knowledge and understandings of wellbeing.

2. Mental health and wellbeing as a shared responsibility

We all have a part to play in maintaining our own health and wellbeing – *and* supporting the health and wellbeing of colleagues, peers, and students at RMIT. To build on this principle, we will refine and re-implement our Peer Support Program as one piece of the puzzle. We will also undertake structural change by introducing SafetyNow – a new, improved way for staff and students to confidentially report psychosocial hazards and incidents. This new approach aims to ensure we are better informed through data, which in turn can improve how we respond and how we reduce risk. From the perspective of working with staff and students, we will continue to facilitate activations and events such as Orientation and Welcome initiatives, the Staff Wellbeing Expo, and capacity-building programs.

3. Knowledge translation and mobilisation

With a maturing approach to mental health and wellbeing at RMIT, we are now busy at work on translating our large-scale quantitative and qualitative data into peer-reviewed publications, national and international conference presentations, and other efforts in knowledge translation and mobilisation. These will be shared throughout RMIT. To help socialise our findings, we will contribute to leading a coalition involving multiple universities – aiming to inform sector-level and policy-focused discussions on mental health and wellbeing in Australia's universities.

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2024 Initiatives mapped onto the Strategic Action Plan

Vision

Together we create a mentally healthy community in which everyone can realise their potential and feel safe and supported in their experience of mental wellbeing.

Action Areas

Culture	Systems	Skills and Experiences	Support
• Increase staff participation in RMIT's annual Mental Wellbeing Survey • Strengthening mental health promotion messaging, particularly in relation to key dates including University Mental Health Day, R U OK? Day, Mental Health Awareness Month, and the Staff Wellbeing Expo	• Learning pathways project • Increase use of SafetyNow for psychosocial hazard and incident reports • Psychosocial risk management • Sharing resources, learning, and assets throughout all RMIT campuses and sites • Review and improve Staff Wellbeing Hub	• Launch RMIT's new Ways of Wellbeing model to contribute to university-wide mental health promotion • Streamlining staff and student offerings • Continue psychosocial risk action planning • Review and improve capacity-building offerings • Video resources on psychosocial risk	• Review, revise, roll out, and re-evaluate Peer Support Program (staff) • Continue wellbeing check-in practices • Build leadership coaching offerings • Strengthen approach and practices in complex case management • Review and improve the Sudden Death Response Team model

Enablers

Leadership
Fostering psychosocial safety climate through participation, role modelling and communication.

External Partnerships
Converge, BUPA, Medibank, Batyr, RMIT Health Innovation Lab

Internal Partnerships
RMIT Student Life, RMIT Sustainability, RMIT Health Innovation Lab, RUSU

Evidence
Data Dashboard Project, Mental Wellbeing Survey 2024, research partnerships
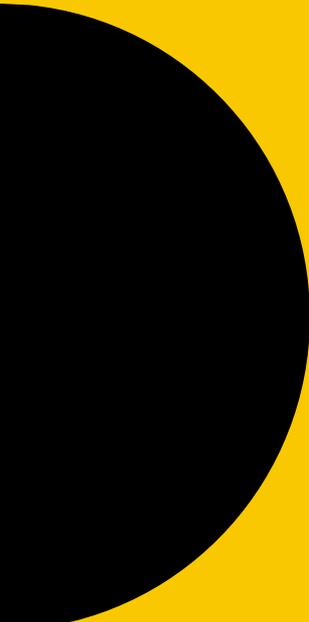
Noon gudgin

Thank you

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Noon gudgin – Thank you

The work of the Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety team would not be possible without the contribution of so many across RMIT.

We would also like to thank everyone who has contributed towards Mental Wellbeing Initiatives in 2023 – our staff, students, and partners. In particular, we would like to thank members of our governance groups for their contributions:

- Our Strategic Advisory Committee
- Our Research and Practice Advisory Group
- Our Staff and Student Mental Wellbeing Champions

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Connect with us

We would love to hear from you about any of:

- your thoughts on our Annual Report
- our activities in 2023
- our plans that you'd like to know more about for 2024
- wellbeing activities or needs in your area in 2024

Please reach out to us at rmitwellbeing@rmit.edu.au

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About the Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety team

The Wellbeing and Psychosocial Safety (WPS) Team is a specialist team within the Health, Safety and Wellbeing area of Operations. WPW are charged with delivering all aspects of RMIT's *Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025*, including the Evaluation Framework with which this Annual Report aligns.

The WPS team includes clinical and organisational psychologists, population mental health researchers, and project management professionals. In bringing together multiple disciplines, professions, backgrounds, and knowledge and skill sets, the team is well-equipped to lead, manage, and evaluate a wide range of programs with both staff and students across RMIT.

The WPS team does not provide one-on-one counselling or employee assistance program-type services. Instead, the team's focus is on mental health promotion and on prevention of mental ill health. To do this, the team uses a "many-to-one" approach – commonly adopted in population mental health – which includes providing information and resources to large groups of individuals, teams, work areas, managers, and leaders, and to the whole RMIT population. Some examples of this work include information sessions, training, focus groups, workshops, campaigns, messaging, or other means as needed.

Population mental health is for everyone – including those who consider themselves to be well. It is well suited to the overarching principles of promotion, prevention, and early intervention that underpin RMIT's *Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan* 2020-2025. As such, it complements – and works in tandem with – more traditional therapeutic counselling and recovery services.

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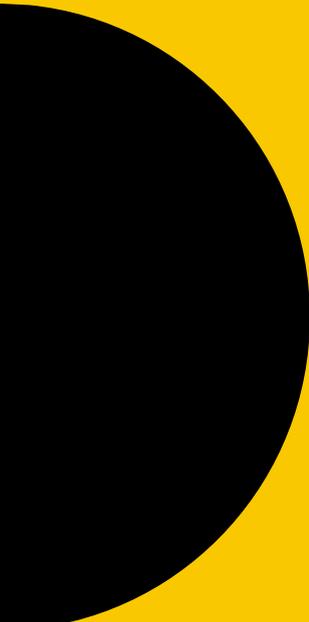
Appendix A

About our strategic approach

RMIT wellbeing

Our Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025

Vision
Together we create a mentally healthy community in which everyone can realise their potential and feel safe and supported in their experience of mental wellbeing.

Why
- We value our people and want them to thrive
- Positive mental wellbeing is an enabler of study and work success
- Mental ill-health is growing global challenge with diversity across cultural groups
- Individual and collective resilience helps navigate disruption and change
- There are both individual and organisational influences on mental health outcomes
- There are clear points in the university year that have greater psychosocial risk

Guiding Principles
1. Initiatives are aligned with our values and core priorities
2. Initiatives focus across the mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention
3. We have an integrated, yet tailored approach to student and staff mental wellbeing
4. Mental wellbeing is embedded in all that we do
5. Mental wellbeing as a shared responsibility

Key Action Areas

Culture
1. Articulate our commitment
2. Collaborate for collective impact
3. Grow meaningful engagement and tell our stories
4. Learn, celebrate and share our success

Systems
1. Review and uplift our policies and procedures
2. Identify, address and monitor key psychosocial risks
3. Influence key organisational system levers in teaching, research and work
4. Audit our practices and strive for accreditation e.g. eSmart

Skills and Experiences
1. Build mental health literacy of our community
2. Increase capabilities to assist others (and self) when in distress
3. Provide tools to proactively build psychological safety and resilience
4. Create physical and online environments that foster mental wellbeing, engagement and access

Support
1. Promote initiatives that support personal mental wellbeing
2. Develop prevention initiatives to support early action
3. Optimise our services and supports for those in need
4. Strengthen our suicide prevention and postvention

Enablers

Leadership
Our leaders are committed and set the tone from the top and invest in mental wellbeing

Partnerships
We partner with internal and external experts to increase our capability, capacity and impact and to respect different ways and knowledges

Evidence
Our work and ways of working are informed by the latest evidence and we use data, monitoring and evaluation to inform decisions

RMIT's Key Action Areas mapped onto external frameworks for student and staff mental health and wellbeing

Read The Plan:

Mental Wellbeing Strategic Action Plan

2020-2025

RMIT wellbeing

RMIT key action areas		Australian University Mental Health Framework	Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces
Culture	Actualising the organisation's collective value on care, collaboration, health and wellbeing, so that both groups and individuals thrive in work and learning.	3) Mentally healthy university communities encourage participation; foster a diverse, inclusive environment; promote connectedness; and support academic and personal achievement. 4) The response to mental health and wellbeing is strengthened through collaboration and coordinated actions.	**Promote**: Recognise and enhance the positive aspects of work that contribute to good mental health.
Systems	Strengthen the organisational policy and processes that drive to reduce risk and increase protective factors for wellbeing.	6) Continuous improvement and innovation is informed by evidence and helps build an understanding of what works for student mental health and wellbeing.	
Skills and experiences	Strengthen individual and shared literacy for mental wellbeing, promote resilience, and capability to respond to others in distress.	1) The student experience is enhanced through mental health and wellbeing approaches that are informed by students' needs, perspectives and the reality of their experiences. 2) All members of the university community contribute to learning environments that enhance student mental health and wellbeing.	**Protect**: Identify and manage work-related risks to mental health.
Support	Support personal mental wellbeing through optimising support services, and uplifting systems and processes for suicide prevention and postvention.	5) Students are able to access appropriate, effective, timely services and supports to meet their mental health and wellbeing needs.	**Respond**: Build capability to identify and respond to support people experiencing mental ill-health or distress.
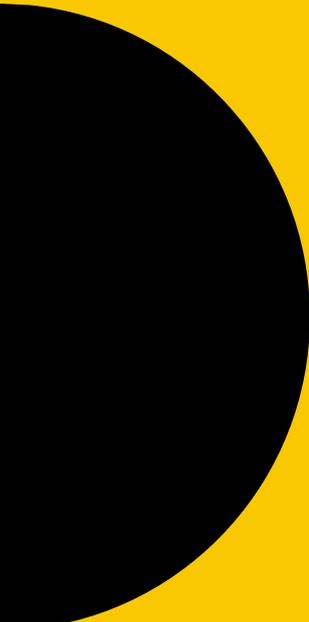
Appendix B
Data points in detail

2023 evaluation data

The Plan's Evaluation Framework articulates a set of quantitative indicators that we will track over time to determine impact.

Baseline data of these key indicators has been compiled in this first formally-evaluated year of the Strategic Action Plan 2020-2025. Subsequent years will be compared against this baseline data to identify trends and then, if those trends are informative, to determine impact.

Some of the main barriers to strategic, evidence-based, and data-driven action tackling complex problems like mental health and wellbeing are lack of consistency over time, lack of integration of data, and lack of transparency. The following tables of staff and student data points represent only a minimal dataset that we hope will remain relatively stable, integrated, and transparent over time and across RMIT.

Data in context – what the numbers can and cannot tell us

As with any quantitative data, the following tables come with inherent limitations and should be interpreted with care and caution. In many cases, individual data points may underestimate the true extent of the measure being tracked over time.

Importantly, though, the data can still be informative if we continue to track the same sources over successive years from baseline in 2021. The aim is to continue improving data collection and collation year-on-year.

Statistics can be misleading when taken out of context. We urge readers to quote these figures in the context of this Annual Report and in conjunction with the commentary provided.

RMIT wellbeing

Note on data reported:
Occasionally, this report details data which are different the data reported in previous Mental Wellbeing Annual Reports. The primary reason is that some data points change retrospectively as more data becomes available, errors are corrected, or data coding/categorisation changes to reflect current approaches. If you have a query about any changes or anomalies, please contact RMITwellbeing@rmit.edu.au.

Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Mental Wellbeing Measure	The Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) **Emotional well-being EWB:** Happy (Item 1) Interested in life (Item 2) Satisfied with life (Item 3) **Social well-being SWB:** Social Contribution (Item 4) Social Integration (Item 5) Social Actualization (i.e., Social Growth) (Item6) Social Acceptance (Item 7) Social Coherence (i.e., Social Interest) (Item 8) **Psychological well-being PWB:** Self-Acceptance (Item9) Environmental Mastery (Item 10) Positive Relations with Others (Item 11) Personal Growth (Item 12) Autonomy (Item 13) Purpose in Life (Item 14)	MHC-SF scale averages (range 0-5): EWB **3.06** SWB **2.39** PWB **3.14**	MHC-SF scale averages (range 0-5): EWB **3.15** SWB **2.46** PWB **3.24***	Results are from a self-selected sample. There was a significant increase in psychological well-being (PWB) in 2023 compared with 2022, likely due to further recovery in community-level mental health wellbeing following the lifting of COVID-19-related restrictions.
		During the PAST MONTH, how often did you feel… 0. Never 1. Once or twice 2. About once a week 3. About 2 or 3 times a week 4. Almost every day 5. Every day **significant change in 2023*		
		MHC-SF categorical results: Flourishing **29%** Moderate **61%** Languishing **10%**	MHC-SF categorical results: Flourishing **33%** Moderate **57%** Languishing **10%**	Despite improvement, rates of Languishing remain higher than we would like to see (ideal is circa 1-6%) and Flourishing rates remain much lower (ideal is circa 40-60%). RMIT needs to continue to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of staff in 2024 and beyond to bring these results into healthier ranges.
		***Flourishing**: 'everyday' or 'almost everyday' for at least seven of the categories, with one from the hedonic EWB cluster* ***Languishing**: 'never' or 'once or twice' for least seven items, with one from the EWB cluster.* ***Moderately** mentally healthy: Neither flourishing nor languishing*		

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Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC-4)	1. **Management commitment**: Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment. 2. **Management priority:** Senior management considers employee psychological health to be as important as productivity. (Management priority) 3. **Organisation communication:** There is good communication here about psychological safety issues which affect me. (Organisational communication) 4. **Organisation participation:** In my organisation, the prevention of stress involves all levels of the organisation. (Organisational participation)	PSC-4 scale averages (range 1-5): Management commitment **3.13** Management priority **3.10** Organisation communication **3.09** Organisation participation **3.77**	PSC-4 scale averages (range 1-5): Management commitment **3.01*** Management priority **2.94*** Organisation communication **2.95*** Organisation participation **3.77** *1. Strongly disagree* *2. Disagree* *3. Neither agree or disagree* *4. Agree* *5. Strongly agree* **significant change in 2023*	PSC across RMIT remains at a "medium" level of risk among staff. The aim is to bring RMIT into the "low" risk category in future surveys and so we need to enhance our approach to PSC in 2024 and beyond. *Note: Results are sampled from voluntary onshore participants in the Mental Wellbeing Survey, comprising less than 20% of students and staff. Convenient selection may have skewed results higher or lower and increased variability, depending on people's motivation for participating.*

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Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Work related wellbeing measures	**Emotional Exhaustion from Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)** 1. At work, I feel mentally exhausted. 2. After a day at work, I find it hard to recover my energy.	BAT scale averages (range 1-5): Mentally exhausted **3.43** Hard to recover **3.32**	BAT scale averages (range 1-5): Mentally exhausted **3.44** Hard to recover **3.34**	When risk factors outweigh protective factors, the outcome is exhaustion. Exhaustion remains elevated with an increase across RMIT onshore staff in 2023. We would like to see BAT levels no higher than 2.7/5. ([Schaufeli, et al., 2020](#)) RMIT needs to continue to work to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors in 2024 to prevent negative psychosocial outcomes for staff such as anxiety, depression, and burnout.
			1. Never *2. Rarely* *3. Sometimes* *4. Often* *5. Always*	
	Engagement items from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) 1. For my work, I feel bursting with energy. 2. I am enthusiastic about my work.	UWES scale averages (range 1-7): Energy **4.24** Enthusiasm **5.03**	UWES scale averages (range 1-7): Energy **4.32** Enthusiasm **5.09**	Work engagement is present when protective factors are equal to or exceed risk factors. Engagement levels should be around 4.8/7 but energy levels did not match enthusiasm and so averaging both items brings current engagement below this benchmark ([Carmona-Halty, et al., 2019](#))
			1. Never *2. A few times a year or less (almost never)* *3. Once a month or less (rarely)* *4. A few times a month (sometimes)* *5. Once a week (often)* *6. A few times a week (very often)* *7. Every day (always)*	

Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Staff Experience Survey	1. I feel like I belong at RMIT 2. My manager gives me useful feedback on how well I am performing 3. My manager genuinely cares about my wellbeing 4. I feel in control and on top of things at work 5. Generally, I believe my workload is reasonable for my role 6. Behaviours like bullying and harassment are not tolerated at RMIT 7. I know how to seek support when concerned about my/others wellbeing	1. **69%** favourable (v. high impact) 2. **67%** favourable (high impact) 3. **80%** favourable (medium impact) 4. **68%** favourable (high impact) 5. 61% favourable (high impact) 6. **78%** favourable (high impact) 7. **85%** favourable (medium impact)	1. **NA (not collected)** 2. 70**%** favourable (high impact) 3. **82%** favourable (medium impact) 4. **NA** 5. **NA** 6. **77%** favourable (high impact) 7. **85%** favourable (medium impact)	On all measures for which data were collected in both 2022 and 2023, there were consistent scores across both years. There was a slight increase (3%) in perceived usefulness of managers' feedback and in perceived managerial care for staff wellbeing. There was a slight decrease (1%) in perceptions that bullying and harassment are not tolerated at RMIT. This demonstrates little change at the population level in terms of particular mental health-adjacent outcomes among staff.
Annual and Sick Leave	Number of staff with more than 25 days accrued annual leave, sick leave taken	Across all of RMIT, **742** staff members have accrued annual leave in excess of 25 days and **11,625** days of sick leave were taken between 1 January and 31 December 2022.	Across all of RMIT, **679** staff members have accrued annual leave in equal to or excess of 25 days and **13,361** days of sick leave were taken between 1 January and 31 December 2023.	Excessive annual leave can indicate excessive workload or work pressures preventing or discouraging people from taking time off. In 2023, when comparing with 2022 data, while the number of staff with excess accrued annual leave decreased, the number of total sick leave days taken by staff increased.

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Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
EAP (Employee Assistance Program)	1.Utilisation data	1. EAP utilisation rate of **4.9%**, above Education sector benchmark of 2.6%.	1a. Converge (July-December): EAP utilisation rate **of 8.1%**, above Education and Training sector benchmark of 4.6%. 1b. Benestar (January-June): EAP utilisation rate of **3.4%** above Education sector benchmark of 2.4%.	The relatively high rate of EAP utilisation at RMIT could be due to either higher demand (e.g., greater need, higher stress levels, or less stigma) or more supply (e.g., lower barriers to uptake, more availability or better-quality service). This elevated rate does not necessarily mean that distress levels are higher at RMIT than elsewhere in the Education sector. RMIT actively encourages staff to use EAP and, at least in the early years of the Plan, we would expect to see efforts to provide support reflected in higher utilisation rates. Over time, utilisation may then come down and stabilise as longstanding promotion and prevention initiatives take effect to reduce the prevalence of work-related stressors and incidence of mental ill-health.
	2.Presenting issue data	2. Presenting issues: **32%** work-related and 68% personal	2a. Converge (July-December): Presenting issues: **34%** work-related and 66% personal 2b. Benestar (January-June): Presenting issues: **29%** work-related and 71% personal	With no benchmark data for comparison, this ratio of personal to work-related presenting issues cannot be interpreted as either high or low but is consistent between years. However, we would like to see the proportion of work-related issues decline in successive years.
	3.Presentation (standard or crisis)	3. Presentation: 19 critical incidents (**3.55%**)	3a. Converge (July-December): Presentation: 4 incidents of crisis counselling **(2%)** 3b. Benestar (January-June): Presentation: 8 critical incidents (**1%**)	Again, there is no benchmark data for critical incidents. From such a small baseline, we expect considerable fluctuation given criticality is influenced by work, personal and wider environmental factors.
	4.Service satisfaction data	4. 78% Very positive (58/74), 12% Somewhat positive (9/74), 7% Very negative (5/74), and 3% Neural or Somewhat negative (2/74)	4. Converge: 77% satisfaction, 27 Net Promoter Score (Favourable likelihood of recommending Converge's services)	A new EAP provider, Converge International, was launched in the second half of 2023. Given differences in the data collected and reported across different EAP providers, levels of service satisfaction in 2023 versus 2022 are not easily comparable.

Staff data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
People Connect	Categories: Harassment, discrimination, bullying, interpersonal conflict (number of complaints)	Harassment **5**, discrimination **3**, bullying **14**, and interpersonal conflict **82**.	Harassment **0**, discrimination **0**, bullying **13**, and interpersonal conflict **87**.	These figures are an underestimate because they do not represent all incidents – only those captured in the HR Assist system. Notably, there was an increase in the number of complaints made relating to interpersonal conflict in 2023 compared with 2022.
PRIME incident report data	1. Mechanism of injury description: Bullying, Harassment, Exposure to mental stress factors (incidents logged) 2. Bodily location description: Mental wellbeing/health 3. Student or Staff (person injured)	1. Mechanism: Bullying **1**, Harassment **5**, Exposure to mental stress factors **8** 2. Bodily location: Mental wellbeing/health **14** 3. Student or Staff: Student **2**, Staff **12**	1. Mechanism: Bullying **1**, Harassment **2**, Exposure to mental stress factors **16** 2. Bodily location: Mental wellbeing/health **19** 3. Student or Staff: Student **7**, Staff **12**	As above, these figures are an underestimate as they do not represent all incidents occurring across the University – only those captured via PRIME. When comparing 2023 data to 2022 data, notable increases were observed in relation to incidents involving exposure to mental stress factors, incidents involving bodily location described as specifically relating to mental wellbeing/health, and incidents involving injury to a student. Further data are needed year-on-year to compare how the frequency of incidence of specific concerns may change over the longer term.

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Student data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC-4)	1. **Management commitment**: Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment. 2. **Management priority:** Senior management considers employee psychological health to be as important as productivity. (Management priority) 3. **Organisation communication:** There is good communication here about psychological safety issues which affect me. (Organisational communication) 4. **Organisation participation:** In my organisation, the prevention of stress involves all levels of the organisation. (Organisational participation)	PSC-4 scale averages (range 1-5): Management commitment **3.23** Management priority **3.28** Organisation communication **3.20** Organisation participation **3.42**	PSC-4 scale averages (range 1-5): Management commitment **3.16** Management priority **3.25** Organisation communication **3.17** Organisation participation **3.44**	PSC across RMIT remains at a "medium" level of risk for students. Only one component – organisational participation – increased in 2023 compared with 2022. However, this increase was not statistically significant. *Note: Results are sampled from voluntary onshore participants in the Mental Wellbeing Survey, comprising less than 15-20% of students and staff. Convenient selection may have skewed results higher or lower and increased variability, depending on people's motivation for participating.*
		1. Strongly disagree *2. Disagree* *3. Neither agree or disagree* *4. Agree* *5. Strongly agree* **significant change in 2023*		

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Student data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Mental Wellbeing Measure	The Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) **Emotional well-being EWB:** Happy (Item 1) Interested in life (Item 2) Satisfied with life (Item 3) **Social well-being SWB:** Social Contribution (Item 4) Social Integration (Item 5) Social Actualization (i.e., Social Growth) (Item 6) Social Acceptance (Item 7) Social Coherence (i.e., Social Interest) (Item 8) **Psychological well-being PWB:** Self-Acceptance (Item 9) Environmental Mastery (Item 10) Positive Relations with Others (Item 11) Personal Growth (Item 12) Autonomy (Item 13) Purpose in Life (Item 14)	MHC-SF scale averages (range 0-5): EWB **2.75** SWB **2.13** PWB **2.75**	MHC-SF scale averages (range 0-5): EWB **2.72** SWB **2.05** PWB **2.69**	Results are from a self-selected sample of students at RMIT. All domains of individual mental wellbeing remain moderate on average (< 3/5 which equates to between 1-3 times a week). Across all domains, average scores were lower in 2023 when compared with 2022.
		During the PAST MONTH, how often did you feel… *0. Never* *1. Once or twice* *2. About once a week* *3. About 2 or 3 times a week* *4. Almost every day* *5. Every day* **significant change in 2023*		
		MHC-SF categorical results: Flourishing **20%** Moderate **62%** Languishing **18%**	MHC-SF categorical results: Flourishing **20%** Moderate **59%** Languishing **21%**	Rates of Languishing were much higher than we would like to see (circa 1-6%) and Flourishing rates were much lower (circa 40-60%). These figures remain concerning and RMIT needs to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of students in 2024 and into the extended recovery period.
		Flourishing: 'everyday' or 'almost everyday' for at least seven of the categories, with one from the hedonic EWB cluster *Languishing: 'never' or 'once or twice' for least seven items, with one from the EWB cluster.* *Moderately mentally healthy: Neither flourishing nor languishing*		

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Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Work related wellbeing measures	**Emotional Exhaustion from Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)** 1. While studying, I feel mentally exhausted. 2. After a day of study, I find it hard to recover my energy.	BAT scale averages (range 1-5): Mentally exhausted **3.61** Hard to recover **3.41** *1. Never* *2. Rarely* *3. Sometimes* *4. Often* *5. Always*	BAT scale averages (range 1-5): Mentally exhausted **3.60** Hard to recover **3.45**	When risk factors outweigh protective factors, the outcome is exhaustion. Exhaustion remains elevated across RMIT onshore staff in 2023 but has reduced when compared with 2022. We would like to see BAT levels no higher than 2.7/5. (Schaufeli, et al., 2020). Addressing longstanding psychosocial risk factors, such as workload, is one critical way (of several) to reduce exhaustion.
	Engagement items from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) 1. For my study, I feel bursting with energy. 2. I am enthusiastic about my study.	UWES scale averages (range 1-7): Energy **4.01** Enthusiasm **4.73** *1. Never* *2. A few times a year or less (almost never)* *3. Once a month or less (rarely)* *4. A few times a month (sometimes)* *5. Once a week (often)* *6. A few times a week (very often)* *7. Every day (always)* **significant change in 2023*	UWES scale averages (range 1-7): Energy **4.02** Enthusiasm **4.92***	Work engagement is present when protective factors are equal to or exceed risk factors. There was a statistically significant increase in students' enthusiasm about study in 2023 compared with 2022. Engagement levels should be around 4.8/7 but energy levels did not match enthusiasm and so averaging both items brings current engagement below this benchmark (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019).

wellbeing

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Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Student Experience Survey	1. At your institution during 2021, to what extent have you had a sense of belonging to RMIT University? 2. The teaching staff normally gave me helpful feedback on how I was going 3. My teacher/lecturer/supervisor genuinely cares about my wellbeing (support) 4. I feel in control and on top of things at university (control) 5. Generally, I believe my study load is reasonable for the course I am enrolled in (demands) 6. Behaviours like bullying and harassment are not tolerated at RMIT (relationships & risk) 7. I know how to seek support when concerned about my/others wellbeing (support)	Scale averages (range 1-5): 1. 3.34 2. 3.67 3. 3.82 4. 3.43 5. 3.70 6. 4.19 7. 3.67 *1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree/or disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree * signifies significant change in 2023*	Scale averages (range 1-5): 1. 3.37* 2. 3.70 3. 4.05* 4. 3.68* 5. 3.81* 6. 4.19 7. 3.95*	These items tell us how students feel about issues related to study that affect their mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, they are important indicators of psychosocial risk and protection throughout the RMIT student population. When comparing 2023 data to 2022 data, significant increases were found in students' sense of belonging, students' sense of being cared for and supported by staff, students' sense of control, students' sense that their study loads are reasonable, and students' knowledge of wellbeing support available. Level of tolerance to concerning behaviours – such as bullying and harassment – remained steady.

RMIT wellbeing

Student data points summary table

Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Counselling service	1. Utilisation data	**2,110** students attended (3% of student cohort), 5997 appointments attended (15% cancellation rate and 11% no-show), 32% initial appointments, 12.3 days between booking and appointment (13.6 days for initial appointment)	**2,102** students attended (3% of student cohort), 6441 appointments attended (15% cancellation rate and 11% no-show), 32% initial appointments, 14.8 days between booking and appointment (19.8 days for initial appointment)	Around 1 in 33 of RMIT's enrolled students accessed the counselling service in 2023, very similar to utilisation rates in recent years and at comparable universities. Wait-times for initial appointments has increased substantially, reversing a pre-pandemic trend of improvement.
	2. Presenting issue data	**69**% psychological (anxiety, depression, sleep issues) **58**% academic (study stress, assessment anxiety, procrastination) **49**% psychosocial (relationship issues, family conflict, friendships) 36% mental health (stress, ADD/ADHD, panic attacks, ASD)	**52**% psychological (anxiety, depression, sleep issues) **42**% academic (study stress, assessment anxiety, procrastination) **42**% psychosocial (life stress, relationship issues, family conflict, friendships) 30% risk (family violence, suicidality, and self-harm) ***Codes changed mid-2022***	These percentages do not add up to 100% because multiple codes are assigned to each person. Overall, there were lower frequencies of psychological concerns presenting in 2023 compared with 2022. From a data fidelity and integrity perspective, it should be noted that codes were revised in 2022. This was undertaken to ensure standardised usage across staff at the Student Counselling Service and, in turn, to make sure that high-quality data are gathered regarding the reasons students attend the service.
	3. Presentation (standard or crisis)	Of the 1,501 students surveyed, **284** (19%) reported extremely severe distress at intake	Of the 1,616 students surveyed, **260** (18.88%) reported extremely severe distress at intake	This figure tells us that a substantial proportion of students continue to present to Student Counselling in an acute state of severe distress and/or crisis. We would like to see this proportion reduce over time as we shift the dial towards promotion, prevention, and early intervention.

wellbeing

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Data source	Key questions	2022 data	2023 data	Interpretation
Equitable Learning Services	No. of registrations among students with mental health conditions	**559** students who have registered for an ELS plan reported a mental health condition	**726** students who have registered for an ELS plan reported a mental health condition	An increase in registrations could be interpreted as a good thing if it means that there is less stigma associated with registering a mental health condition. These figures will need to be interpreted in context of other data associated with incidence and prevalence of mental ill-health at RMIT.
Enrolment	Leave of absence	**4125** students took a leave of absence from study (194 due to COVID-19 and 1085 due to personal reasons)	**8107** students took a leave of absence from study (11 due to COVID-19 and 1900 due to personal reasons)	These numbers are tracked over time and represent only the student presentations that are recorded in RMIT's systems. Almost twice as many students took a leave of absence from study in 2023 when compared with 2022 – including almost twice as many due specifically to personal reasons. Again, these figures will need to be interpreted in context of other data associated with incidence and prevalence of mental ill-health at RMIT.
Other student support services	Reason codes (headcount of students reporting particular issues when seeking support other than counselling) Behaviours of Concern – Bullying Behaviours of Concern - Discrimination/Vilification/Victimisation Health and Wellbeing - Mental health issues Health and Wellbeing - Suicidal ideation	Bullying **2** Discrimin./Vilific./Victimis. **1** Mental health issues **52** Suicidal ideation **16**	Bullying **0** Discrimin./Vilific./Victimis. **0** Mental health issues **47** Suicidal ideation **7**	As above, these numbers are tracked over time and represent only the student presentations that are recorded in RMIT's systems. Compared with 2022, in 2023 there were fewer presentations of these issues across all reason codes.

wellbeing

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