

University of New England (UNE)

Safety Culture and Wellbeing Assessment

June 2023



**Building a better
working world**

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23 June 2023

University of New England Safety Culture and Wellbeing Assessment

Private and Confidential

Dear Joe

We are pleased to provide you with our Safety Culture and Wellbeing Assessment Report. This report provides an overview of our observations, improvement opportunities and recommendations that would guide UNE in improving and sustaining a safe and healthy culture.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you and your team on this important project.

Yours sincerely

Ernst and Young (EY)



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1 Executive summary

Context

EY was engaged to conduct an assessment of the Safety Culture and Wellbeing of the University of New England's (UNE) workforce. Specifically, EY was requested to undertake an assessment of *"the factors that contribute to ensuring UNE is a safe workplace... based on the review, to produce recommendations concerning actions that may be implemented to ensure that UNE has a positive workplace culture and is a safe University workplace free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination and where staff are confident that they are supported, valued, respected, and enabled"*.

The assessment commenced in March and concluded in June 2023. It is noted that this report reflects the information available to EY at the time of its writing and is limited to the documents reviewed and the views expressed by participants in the assessment process. It is noted that participation was voluntary.

Our understanding of Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Culture

Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Culture and Psychological Safety are outcomes of complex multifactorial non-linear relationships between various Human and Systems factors. These outcomes can be influenced indirectly, by making changes to their various inputs given the absence of 1:1 relationships between the contributing factors and their cultural and psychological safety outcomes. These inputs include: Leadership, Capability and Attitudes, along with the Systems that interact with Humans in the workplace as explained in EY's HSW Transformation Model (refer to diagram below).

The assessment provides UNE with a view of the As-Is HSW Culture state that can be utilised as a baseline against which HSW culture change/transformation can progress and be measured.

Methodology:

The assessment included:

- ▶ A desktop assessment of relevant policies, processes and procedures
- ▶ Mixed-methods data analysis of:
 - ▶ >530 anonymous survey and submission responses
 - ▶ 11 x semi-structured Interviews
 - ▶ 10 x focus groups.

EY's HSW Transformation Model



What's working well

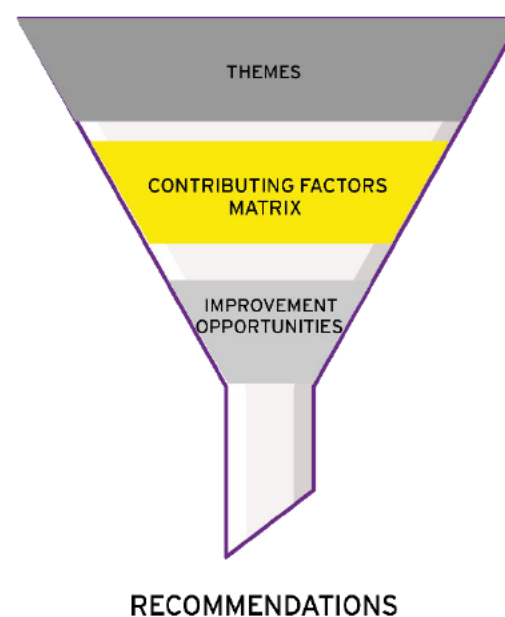
Consultation with the University's workforce provided insights into what they value about the As-Is HSW culture state. These insights informed our view on what's working well and revealed a community of people who value their relationships with colleagues and associated teams. Many of those who are local to the Armidale campus reported that they value their strong ties to the community. Across participants more broadly, there was a strong sense of personal investment to see UNE succeed.

Many participants who reported being in stable employment with the University shared that they value the flexibility and employment benefits. Across all areas of consultation, many participants indicated that they value the supportive, dedicated, diverse and committed colleagues they interact with at UNE and the positive impact that University has on students and the broader community.

Observations

Themes emerged from the data analysis. These were used to identify contributing factors and opportunities for improvement, which in turn, informed the development of recommendations.

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Observations (continued)

Themes that relate to HSW culture emerged from the data, taking into account UNE’s operating context and background.

HSW Culture Themes:

- 1. Why are we here? Differing views on Being and Becoming
- 2. Fractured relationships and counterproductive behaviours
- 3. United we stand. Divided we fall: ‘The Business’ vs ‘The Academy’
- 4. Leadership Challenges vs Challenging Leadership
- 5. Selective process fixation, escalation culture and poor organisational discipline
- 6. Doing more with less: Workload and its organisation
- 7. The silos are strong. The radio signal is weak
- 8. Creating Clarity in The Mist: Governance, responsibilities and accountabilities
- 9. Change, Change Management and Initiative Fatigue
- 10. When the sum of the parts detracts from the whole

These themes, along with the mixed methods data analysis informed the contributing factors matrix and opportunities for improvement.



Opportunities for improvement were identified in the following areas:

- 1. Leadership and leading capability
- 2. Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and ownership
- 3. Governance
- 4. Organisational justice
- 5. Siloes and disjointed communication
- 6. Systems and processes: integration with people
- 7. Organisational discipline

Recommendations:

The recommendations have been developed in order to provide a structured approach to addressing these areas of opportunities:

- 1. Develop and connect UNE’s people to a galvanising and enduring Purpose and Strategy into which Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety are interwoven
- 2. Build safety leadership capability across all levels of the organisation
- 3. Create a Movement for Change
- 4. Develop internal supports and conduct further internal reviews into the systems and ways of work at UNE to increase HSW
- 5. Develop and maintain person-centred work design and practices.

The observations and recommendations in this report have been designed with respect to the EY HSW Transformation Model and address the following areas of priority:

- ▶ Rebuild Culture of Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety
- ▶ Proactively mitigate psychosocial risks through controls with following focal points: Workload, Leadership and Counterproductive behaviours
- ▶ Deployment of targeted Psychological Safety based interventions.

See recommendations and implementation roadmap.

Concluding remarks:

The EY team thanks all participants who contributed to the assessment for the openness and candour with which they shared their experiences and their valued suggestions on how to bring about positive changes to improve the HSW Culture of the University. The team also thanks the University for the opportunity to undertake this important piece of work. This assessment forms a larger and ongoing body of work to undertake cultural reform at the University.

Limitations

The services provided to the University of New England by EY are advisory in nature and thus do not constitute an audit, a review, or an engagement performing agreed-upon procedures in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards. Findings are concluded based on discussions with personnel and examination of available documentation. This material has been prepared for general informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as accounting, tax, legal or other professional advice. Please refer to your advisors for specific advice.

In carrying out our work and preparing our report, we have worked solely on the instructions of the University of New England and for the University of New England’s purposes. Our report may not have considered issues relevant to any third parties, and any use such third parties may choose to make of our report is entirely at their own risk and we shall have no responsibility whatsoever in relation to any such use, and the University of New England holds EY harmless from any claims against EY from such third parties. The nature and content of any information EY has provided reflects the specific scope and limitations of our engagement (Engagement Letter dated 21/02/2023), the amount and accuracy of information provided to us, and the timescale within which the data was required.

The University of New England management team are fully and solely responsible for applying independent judgment with respect to the services and work products provided by EY, to make decisions, if any, and to determine further courses of action with respect to any matters addressed in this report. Our work products are intended solely for the information and use of the University of New England’s management, officers, directors and employees and may not be disclosed to, used by or relied upon by any other party without our prior written consent, except as required by law.

EY has not identified, addressed or corrected any errors or defects in the University of New England’s computer systems, other devices or components thereof (“Systems”), whether or not due to imprecise or ambiguous entry, storage, interpretation or processing or reporting of data. EY is not responsible for any defect or problem arising out of or related to data processing in any Systems.





2 Background

Legacy: *Community* as the defining element of *University*

At their inception, universities were conceptualised as *Universitas magisterium et scholarium*; very roughly, a community made up of Masters and Scholars. Since this time, universities have been at the centre of learning, research, scientific, theological and philosophical endeavour.

Despite their differences in areas of focus and specialisations, access, approaches to pedagogy and geography, some elements can be said to have remained engrained in the very fabric of their being. Not least of these being a social contract, at the centre of which, one could argue, some critical elements have always been found: Unity, Collaboration, Community and Purpose.

It is evident that in modern times Universities have been compelled to face the realities of a commoditised market driven system, in which they compete against each other on a global scale, often with poorly differentiated value propositions. In response, universities have had little option but to adopt economic rationalist ideologies. Some might contend that this turn of events has interfered with the fundamental *raison d'être* of these institutions, giving way to a dampening of the sense of community and identity in these structures. Many in the tertiary sector now point to this as a shared malaise of the modern world of learning, teaching and research.

After centuries of quiescence, predictability and an orderly hierarchical structure, market forces have compelled the sector to transform. Universities have responded to this challenge with varying degrees of success.

Sector: Higher Education in Australia

Before the Dawkins reforms of the late 1980's, when a significant set of modernisation measures was adopted in the Australian tertiary context; the fundamental hierarchies, traditions, student-teacher relationships and organisational models of universities had remained largely stable for decades. The Bradley Review of 2008 recommended changes to funding models that forced changes to operational strategy, bringing significant disruption to the sector. The subsequent introduction of the demand driven funding system in 2012, followed by the Watt review of 2015, saw further unsettled conditions which heralded the beginning of an era marred by funding instability and low predictability for the sector as a whole.

Some of the major trends shaping the future of the Higher Education Sector in Australia include:

- ▶ Government funding falling in real terms
- ▶ Workforce disruption (aging, casualisation, mental health and wellbeing challenges, expectations of pedagogical digital excellence)
- ▶ Emerging "post pandemic" 'blended learning norms
- ▶ Increased open competition for funding and students from international universities and non-university online education providers
- ▶ Accelerated commercialisation of the sector
- ▶ Free and low-cost access to information and educational content
- ▶ Shifting focus towards student employment outcomes
- ▶ Digital transformation and the sector-wide move away from "chalk and talk" delivery
- ▶ Increased competition in the on-line learning space from tertiary and non-tertiary education providers, catalysed by Covid-19
- ▶ Globalisation and competition for international students, along with offshoring of Australian institutions
- ▶ A challenged sense of identity in terms of the role of the sector.

UNE: Australia's oldest regional university

A history of equitable access to education

The University of New England (UNE) is a leading regional University and was the first Australian University established outside of a capital city. UNE's original and main campus is in the city of Armidale, in northern central New South Wales. Since its establishment, UNE has had strong links to the local community and plays an important role in its local economy. UNE is the largest employer in the New England North West region and contributes \$318 million to the GDP of New England (The economic impact of regional universities network, 2018). UNE has expanded campus locations to other regional Australian towns including Tamworth, Moree and Taree in aiming to foster stronger, more resilient communities.

UNE has played a pivotal and leading role in the provision of distance education since the 1990s. With its longstanding purpose to bring education to the regions outside of capital cities and enable anyone with an enquiring mind to undertake university study. The University has strived to support innovation through research excellence and regional community partnerships, primarily through agriculture research and investment¹.

The University's focus on delivering online and distance education has enhanced the lives of thousands of people in Australia who would otherwise have been unable to pursue University studies. Today, UNE is recognised as an innovator in flexible online learning that has extended its education provision globally. The students at the University are predominately mature-age students with the majority (84.5%) of enrolments being for online delivery (UNE 2021 Annual Narrative Report).

UNE Strategy, Values and Goals

In 2021, UNE launched its new strategic journey, Future Fit, 2021-2030² and announced its renewed values within this strategy. These are: Be Open, Be Enquiring, Be Exceptional, Make a Difference¹. UNE's strategic goals are to be "a leading online education provider, dedicated community partner and a vital regional economic engine" (Future Fit, 2021-2030).

Governance

UNE and its governance structures were formed under the UNE Act 1993 (NSW) (UNE Act) and its by-laws³. In accordance with the Act, the Body of the University comprises of the UNE Council, Convocation, UNE graduates and students, and members of staff. According the UNE Act, UNE's objective is the promotion of scholarship, research and academic excellence and to support the interaction between research and teaching.

The Council is UNE's governing authority and has functions conferred upon it under the UNE Act³. Its purpose is to oversee the operation of UNE for the benefit of students, staff, the academic community and wider community as a whole. The UNE Council establishes committees that are responsible for the analysis, review and endorsement of recommendations from UNE's management, as well as for the identification of organisational risk and opportunities.

Convocation was established by the UNE Act and its function is to submit to the Council proposals with respect to the interests of the University. The convocation allows the voices of the UNE community to be heard by the UNE Council, and requires a quorum of 100 members³.

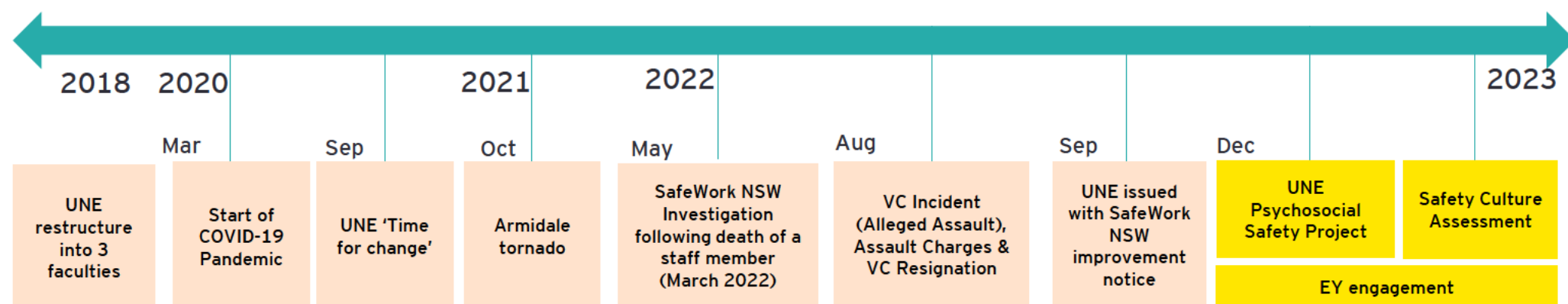
¹ University of New England. (2021). *Annual Report: 2021 (Narrative report)*.

² University of New England. (2021). *Future Fit 2021 - 2030, UNE Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023*. <https://www.une.edu.au/strategic-plan>.

³ University of New England. (2023). *Governance at UNE*. <https://www.une.edu.au/about-une/governance>.

⁴ University of New England. (2023). *Our values at culture*. <https://www.une.edu.au/about-une/our-values-and-culture>.

Timeline: Events in lead-up to UNE Safety Culture and Wellbeing Assessment



UNE Context:

During 2018, UNE underwent a university-wide restructure that saw 10 stand-alone schools moved in into 3 broad faculties.

In July 2019, a new Vice-Chancellor (VC) was appointed.

In September 2020, over 100 staff, equating to ~15% of the workforce, requested voluntary redundancy during the UNE 'Time for Change' initiative. Of those, a third were academic. This change initiative was undertaken in an effort to reduce the headcount and address budget constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second stage of Time for Change commenced in 2021, with development of institutional leadership capabilities, deployment of the UNE integrated services model and updated budget control processes, together with a major review of human resources services (UNE Annual Report 2021).

Contemporaneously, the town of Armidale was hit with a destructive tornado that damaged more than 1000 local homes. The tornado damaged 17.6 hectares and a quarter of the buildings on the Armidale campus¹. This damage caused two emergency campus closures, 472 staff to be displaced and significant disruption to teaching.

In August 2022, UNE attracted media scrutiny following an incident involving the previous VC, who was charged by NSW Police with common assault and offensive conduct. The VC resigned shortly after the incident. In the following months, the UNE professoriate and The National Tertiary Education Union wrote to the UNE council requesting an independent review, highlighting evidence of misconduct, describing a loss of faith in the UNE governance, complaints and reporting processes; and seeking a review of senior leadership recruitment and appointments.

Subsequently, SafeWork NSW commenced an investigation into UNE, following allegations of unsafe working conditions dating back to July 2020. Reports had been made by UNE staff around lack of role clarity, low job control and poor organisational justice. The regulator issued an improvement notice in September 2022, after identifying potential breaches of the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2012, including allegations that workers were being asked to meet unrealistic deadlines and to perform roles exceeding their training or capabilities⁵.

Based on our consultation with the UNE community, these events have had a significant collective impact. Many participants in our consultation disclosed ongoing uncertainty and concerns around job security, continued damage and repairs to the campus, concerns relating to burnout and wellbeing more generally, and repeated changes in the executive and leadership teams with many in acting roles and an overall reported lack of trust in the management from the front line staff.

Convocation to the UNE Council

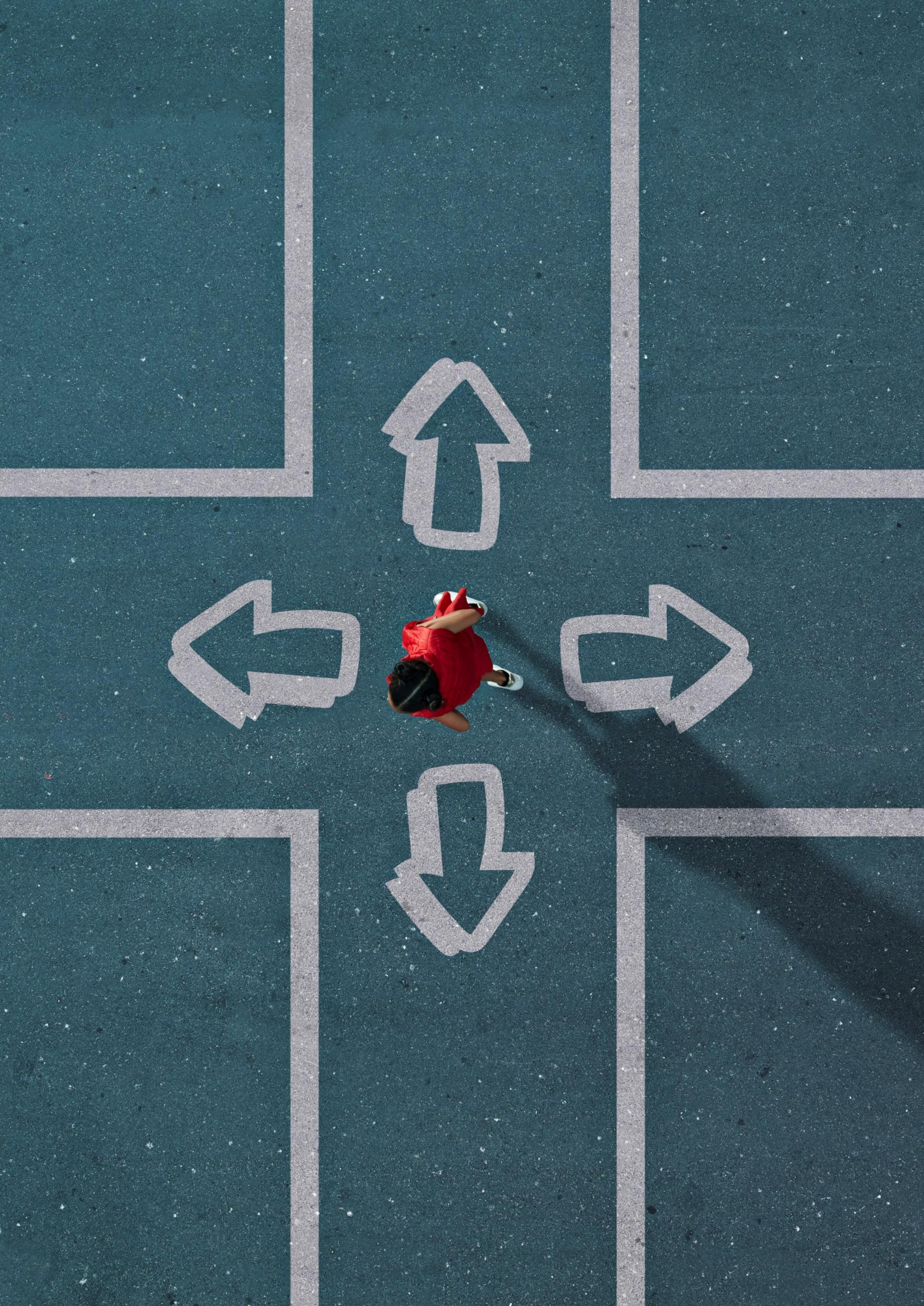
In late 2022, over 500 members of convocation requested a forum with the UNE council to address a number of concerns following the above events (Convocation Meeting Minutes, December 2022). Three proposals were put forward for the Council to consider, which aimed to strengthen UNE as a safe workplace:

- ▶ **Proposal 1: A Standing committee for convocation**
 - ▶ A standing committee for convocation was requested to foster open dialogue with the Council. It expressed that communication should be opened up and include both academic and professional staff.
- ▶ **Proposal 2: Improve accountability at the Council and executive levels**
 - ▶ The UNE community expressed that they felt the University was at a "low point". They desired strengthened accountability at Council and executive levels, and sought more transparent and collaborative decision making. Members of convocation did not believe the current "top down approach" was effective and believe that the approach isolates leadership from the problem.
 - ▶ Alumni raised their concerns for the fate of UNE and highlighted the impact of the '2018 change', and the 2020 'Time for Change'. They also raised that the WorkSafe improvement notice would require significant effort to rebuild a safe workplace.
- ▶ **Proposal 3: Call for resignations and for transparent and consultative recruitment processes**
 - ▶ The members of Convocation raised the impact that management had to staff wellbeing on a daily basis, noting the need for managing workload, staff burnout and overall behaviour.
 - ▶ Staff expressed a desire for a transparent appointment process for future senior executives.

¹ University of New England. (2021). Annual Report: 2021 (Narrative report).

⁵ Boschoff, E. (2022). SafeWork Improvement Notice update, UNE Blog. <https://blog.une.edu.au/pulsenews/2022/12/08/safework-improvement-notice-update/>.

⁶ University of New England. (2022). Convocation Meeting Minutes, Friday 2 December 2022. https://www.une.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/456955/FOR-7-Members-of-Convocation-Copy-of-DRAFT-Minutes-of-Convocation-2-December-2022.pdf





UNE today and the pathway forward

Following the events of the past five years, the UNE Executive engaged EY to undertake an assessment of its current systems of work to manage psychological health and safety in the workplace and identified the need to undertake a broader safety culture and wellbeing assessment.

EY was engaged to support UNE's existing efforts in a psychosocial safety compliance project, which commenced in December 2022. As part of EY's assessment, UNE systems and processes were assessed against the NSW Code of Practice for Managing Psychosocial Hazards, taking into consideration the psychosocial hazards identified in the SafeWork NSW improvement notice. A psychosocial risk management framework was subsequently developed to incorporate existing policies and procedures, and identify gaps to improve UNE's systematic approach to managing psychosocial hazards. This included processes related to supporting teams, workload management, safe and respectful behaviours, change management and a HSW assurance framework. Work has commenced to develop these procedures and associated tools in consultation with staff and HSW representatives.

The UNE Safety Culture and Wellbeing Assessment commenced in February 2023 with the executive establishing an independent committee to oversee the assessment and its findings, in a commitment to rebuild trust and ensure transparency.

UNE is committed to being a key provider of distance education and to strengthening regional communities. Staff and management have recognised the pivotal role this assessment plays in this and towards rebuilding the trust and safety of the UNE community.

The value of Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Culture

A broad and generally agreed upon view of culture is that it is made up of a set of shared mindsets, values, beliefs and behaviours that are strengthened by a strong social context. People in an organisation may simply describe culture as, “the way we do things around here”.

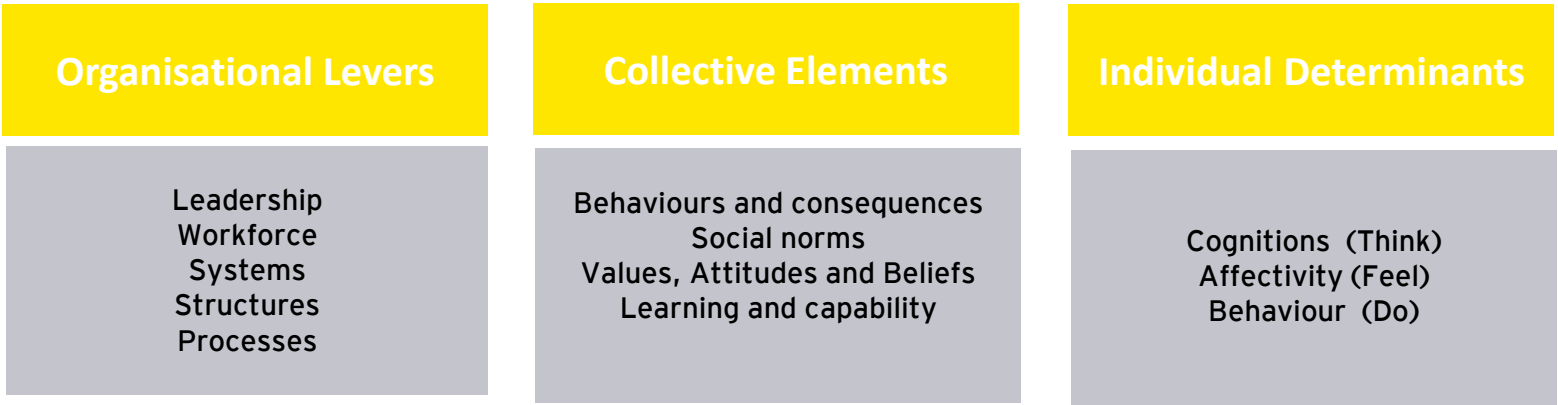
In addition to being a broadly accepted determinant of an organisation’s HSW performance, workplace culture is generally acknowledged as being a critically important contributor to a broad range of performance measures from employee engagement through to financial results and innovation. An organisation’s culture can act to either contribute or detract from the ability of the organisation to meet its objectives and perform (Schneider et al. 2013).

Culture forms the default ways of thinking and behavioural expectations within teams, functions and organisations. It forms a set of unwritten rules and those who are part of the culture learn, through the social context, what the consequences for deviation from and reinforcements for adherence to this set of informal rules are (Hofstede, 1991; Schein, 1990).

It is well understood that a high-performance culture is not formed directly and prescriptively. It can only be designed and shaped indirectly, with regard for its inputs.

Building operational excellence and creating a safe and healthy workplace requires universities to navigate the complex challenges of digital, human and technological disruption. All whilst contending with the transformation of the sector with perennial competition in the latest funding model and industrial relations challenges.

It may be argued that in its simplest representation, culture consists of three main broad categorical facets; organisational levers, cultural elements and individual determinants. Each contributing uniquely to the integrated concept of HSW culture.



It is our view that Culture and Psychological Safety are outcomes of complex multifactorial and non-linear relationships between various Human and Systems factors. These outcomes can be influenced indirectly, by making changes to their various inputs. These inputs include: Leadership, Capability and Attitudes, along with the Systems that interact with Humans in the workplace.



Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
Schein, E. H. (1990). *Organizational culture*. *American Psychologist*, 45(2), 109-119
Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M.G. and Macey, W.H. (2013). *Organizational Climate and Culture*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64(1), pp.361-388

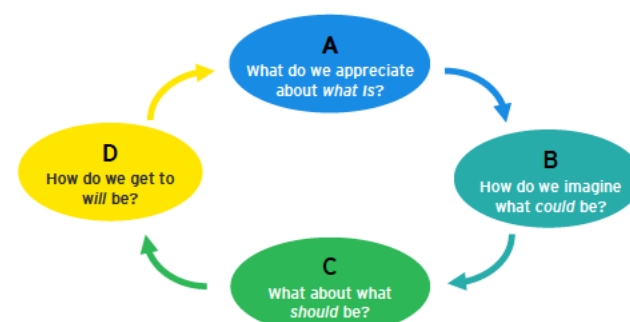
Methodology

Methodology

In keeping with the purpose of the current assessment, members of the Executive, senior leaders, along with academic and professional staff across UNE were consulted via surveys and submissions, and/or interviewed directly in a 1:1 setting, or by way of participation in a focus group.

Appreciative Inquiry is a strength based approach to engage stakeholders in self-determined change. It lends itself well to the analysis of culture in an organisational setting. At EY, we use ABCD as an adaptation of the Appreciative Inquiry model (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). The approach takes a positive lens to questions asked in relation to four main areas:

- ▶ A - What do we appreciate about What Is?
- ▶ B - How do we imagine what Could be?
- ▶ C - What about what Should be?
- ▶ D - How do we get to Will be?



Semi-structured interviews

11 interviews were conducted with senior UNE leaders, selected to represent a cross section of UNE's most senior leadership across the organisation. These interviews involved stimulus questions being put to interviewees in a 1:1 context.

Focus Groups

10 focus groups were conducted with a cross section of representatives from a cross section of the university. Participants were selected via a request for expressions of interest. UNE staff who expressed interest in participating were invited to attend a focus group session, with almost 90 staff participating in the sessions. The purpose of these voluntary focus groups was to obtain further data to elucidate specific questions relating to the HSW culture of UNE that were not already covered in the survey and submissions.

Survey and Submissions

A voluntary survey of HSW culture was conducted, with optional submissions included. The survey and submissions were delivered electronically to all UNE staff who remained anonymous, and >530 responses were received.

Data Reduction and Analysis:

A mixed-methods data analysis was undertaken with quantitative analysis of trends in the survey data. Thematic analysis was completed in accordance with the process described by Braun and Clarke (2006), who propose an approach for thematic analysis that lends itself readily to the review of qualitative data and assessment of culture. This involves:

- ▶ Familiarisation with the data, including submissions, focus groups and interviews: Becoming familiar with the critical content and location of the content across the modes of consultation and with regard for demographic differences
- ▶ Codification: The generation of simple labels to identify features of the data that stand out
- ▶ Theme search: The examination of the codes and collated data with the purpose of identifying broader patterns of meaning, or themes
- ▶ Assessment of themes: Checking the themes against the data set, to establish that themes are distinct and additive. At this point, themes are usually refined, split, combined or deleted
- ▶ Defining and naming: Development of a detailed thematic analysis and working out how the themes interact with one another
- ▶ Write up: Summarising the narrative analysis of the data and contextualising the findings in relation to the setting.



What's working well?

The following observations were made regarding aspects of UNE's HSW culture that were identified by participants to be working well at the time of our engagement. The table below summarises the key positive factors that emerged from the data, that can contribute to a positive HSW Culture in the workplace:

Documentation review	▶ A variety of programs, policies, processes and systems have been implemented by UNE to support the evolution of a safe workplace culture ▶ UNE has commenced a roll out of training for senior leaders to improve mental health literacy and awareness.
Consultation	▶ Many participants indicated that they value the relationships with their colleagues within their immediate and associated team ▶ Many participants who are local to the Armidale campus have strong ties to the local community and value this ▶ Strong sense of personal investment across a large proportion of participants to see UNE succeed ▶ Access to flexibility and employment benefits for many of those participants who are in stable employment ▶ Many participants indicated that they value the supportive, dedicated, diverse and committed colleagues they interact with at UNE ▶ Positive impact of the University on students and the broader community.

Your people said:

- “I love working in a diverse and supportive community of colleagues in regional Australia. I enjoy the opportunities to engage with our local community in partnership through teaching, research and service.”
- “I value the way in which we make higher education accessible to people who might not otherwise be able to access it.”
- “Hardworking colleagues who care about excellence in teaching and research, and who work towards a positive workplace culture.”
- “Some of the staff are brilliant at what they do and show great commitment to their work, the students, UNE and the Armidale community.”
- “I value the difference this organisation makes to our city. Having lived in Armidale all my life, I know how important UNE is for our town and how important the wider community is for our students and staff.”
- “The impact we have on meaningful change of students lives.”
- “The relationships we build with stakeholders.”
- “The friendships we make with our colleagues.”



Thematic Analysis

Cultural themes were emerged and are analysed below:

Through the data analysis, the main themes were extracted and synthesised using mixed methodology. Data conversion and triangulated quantitative and qualitative data extracted were converged and deploying inductive and deductive analysis.

The following themes that relate to HSW culture were emerged from the data analysed:

Theme 1: Why are we here? Differing views on Being and Becoming

Theme 2: Fractured relationships and counterproductive behaviours

Theme 3: United we stand. Divided we fall: 'The Business' vs 'The Academy'

Theme 4: Leadership Challenges vs Challenging Leadership

Theme 5: Selective process fixation, escalation culture and poor organisational discipline

Theme 6: Doing more with less: Workload organisation

Theme 7: The silos are strong. The radio signal is weak

Theme 8: Creating Clarity in The Mist: Governance, responsibilities and accountabilities

Theme 9: Change, Change Management and Initiative Fatigue

Theme 10: When the sum of the parts detracts from the whole

“

“Encouraging a culture of accountability, where people respect all their colleagues”

“

“In my vision of the healthiest culture at UNE, there would be equality for all...”

Imagine what the healthiest culture at UNE would look like to you...

“

“A culture which is about innovation and building shared benefit for the community and industry; a culture which is about what I can do to help you; a culture that is about respect”

“

“A healthy culture should see diversities as strengths”

“

“Open and transparent communication and interactions. Culture of mutual respect that celebrates the person not their position”

Theme 1:
Why are we here? Differing views on Being and Becoming

Central to the observations of many participants, were individual rationales for the existence of the University as a place of research, learning and teaching within the community.

Whilst it should not be surprising to find differing views about this, the nature of the responses points to a set of individual assumptions regarding purpose that do not add up to a coherent, readily identifiable and accepted view of the collective. There did not appear to be a shared common and aligned sense of purpose across the workforce.

A strong and aligned sense of purpose and identity can be protective of the workforce and the organisation during times of change or adversity. In the absence of such alignment, the workforce is more susceptible to struggling with adaptation to unexpected challenges, which can be detrimental to HSW. This can erode organisational resilience, increase resistance to change and negatively impact on an organisation’s ability to be responsive to external challenges.

Furthermore, lack of alignment to strategy, purpose and identity can contribute to an inconsistent and fragmented culture by default. The potential HSW consequences of this include: development and/or maintenance of siloes, increased internal conflict, diminished morale, lowered employee engagement, misaligned goals and lack of organisational cohesion.

A sense of shared purpose drives the mindsets and behaviours that are required to meet the aforementioned challenges head on. Conversely, the absence of common purpose and a leadership team ready to bring along all people, adds risk to long term viability, given the nature and complexity of the current context.

The context in which universities operate is undergoing a period of flux. It could be argued that now, more than ever before, clarity on purpose in the tertiary sector is not optional, but paramount. It is our view that a shared sense of purpose is a pre-requisite to the development of a sense of identity, which is also integral to the development of the set of social norms, behaviours and cognitions that are understood to encompass a Culture where Health, Safety and Wellbeing can flourish.

Your people said:



“Everyone should be working together towards a common goal.”

“Clear, concise and communicated strategic plan that has been created through meaningful consultation with both professional and academic staff at all levels.”

“A range of institutional partnerships should also be formed, some in Australia, some in India, and a large number in the US.”

“In my corner of the institution, we need sound business strategies rather than toxic identity politics.”

“Empowering the Executive Principals to make decisions and drive the changes that they need to make within their groups to deliver on the strategy.”

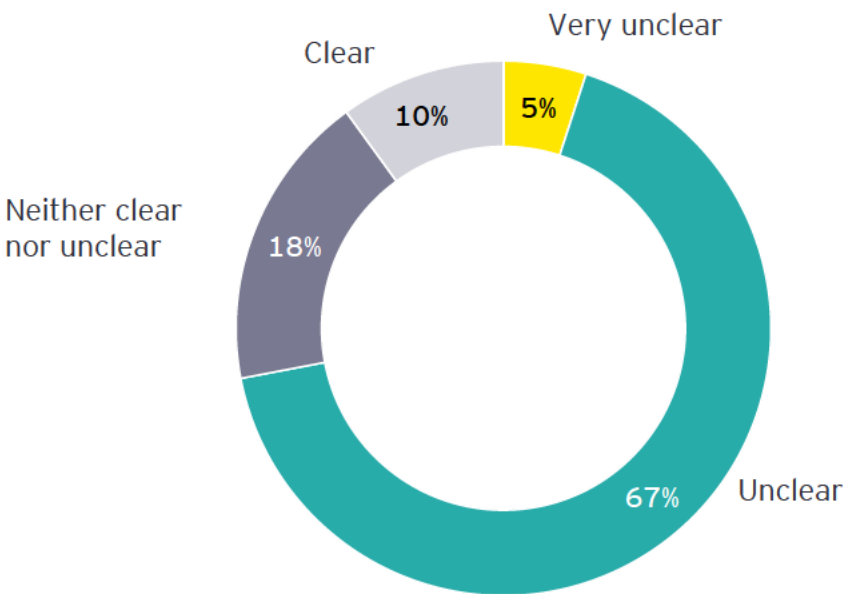
“Staffing that genuinely reflects the work required and particularly the pedagogical responsibilities we have to the students.”

“Tear up all our courses and start afresh with a clean slate - design a new, coherent suite of course offerings to be what we really feel passionate about teaching, informed by our research, informed by genuinely shared values... and designed to serve 21st century students.”

66%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “UNE has a well documented operating model that is clear to all stakeholders”

Focus Group data: How clearly defined do you believe UNE’s purpose is?



Theme 2:
Fractured relationships and counterproductive behaviours

- ▶ 68% of respondents to the survey disagreed with the statement, "At UNE, everyone is treated with respect". 69% of respondents to the survey reported having witnessed or experienced bullying at UNE
- ▶ 37% of survey respondents disagreed with the statement, "I feel that underrepresented groups at UNE are provided with a platform to have a voice"
- ▶ 42% of respondents to the survey also disagreed with the statement "diversity of thought is encouraged at UNE", whilst 5% of respondents indicated a belief that they had been denied training and career opportunities on account of their racial or ethnic background, or on the basis of cultural responsibilities
- ▶ Psychological safety was rated adversely by participants, with 68% agreeing or somewhat agreeing with the statement, "fear of repercussion stops people from reporting issues that impact on HSW"
- ▶ 19% of participants indicated they had witnessed or experienced sexual harassment at UNE. Due to the significant proportion of respondents who did not disclose their gender, insights into prevalence by gender were limited.

Organisations are human institutions, a group of individuals pursuing common goals. As such, at the center of HSW culture success is the ability of individuals, teams, groups and departments to relate well with each other. Trust and respect are at the center of professional human relationships; where the tension between sameness and difference needs to be carefully managed and indeed harnessed, for therein lies the value of a vibrant organisation, one that has derived the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

Whilst policies and practices exist to support diversity and inclusion efforts, these are still seen by many in the organisation as akin to an input quota. Until such a time that the focus on the outcome is at least equivalent to the input, the diversity and inclusion equation will remain unbalanced and the University may note at the organisational level:

- ▶ A low level of value for difference
- ▶ The development of cliques that govern in-groups and out-groups
- ▶ The unhelpful narrative that ensues when such groups are created and fostered by the environment.

Your people said:

“Leadership empowering and supporting employees, instead of consistent questioning and micro-management.”

“Less fear, more accountability.”

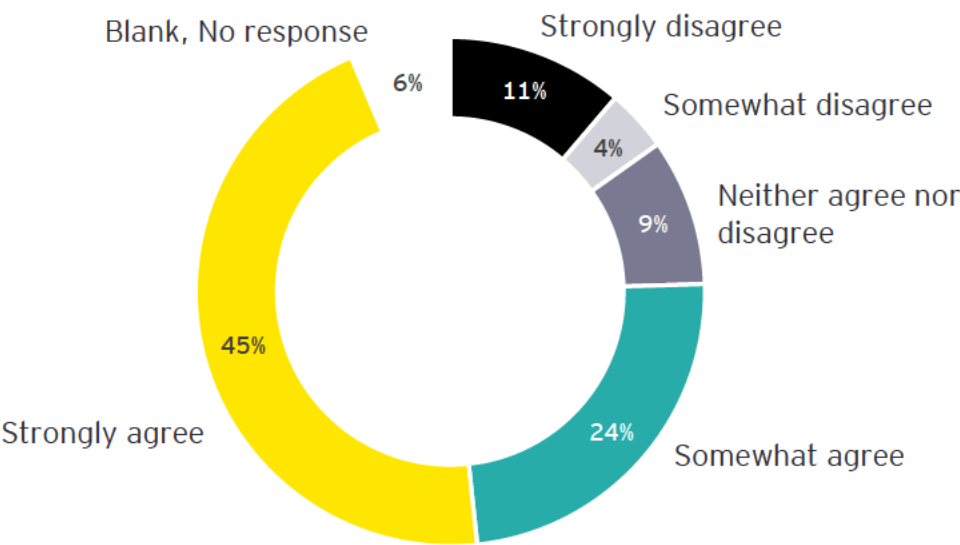
“By addressing the issue of bullying and favouritism and creating a culture of fairness, transparency, and support, UNE would be able to foster a healthier and more productive working environment for its staff and students.”

“Ensuring fairness and transparency in decision-making processes, particularly in areas such as resource allocation, funding, and workload distribution.”

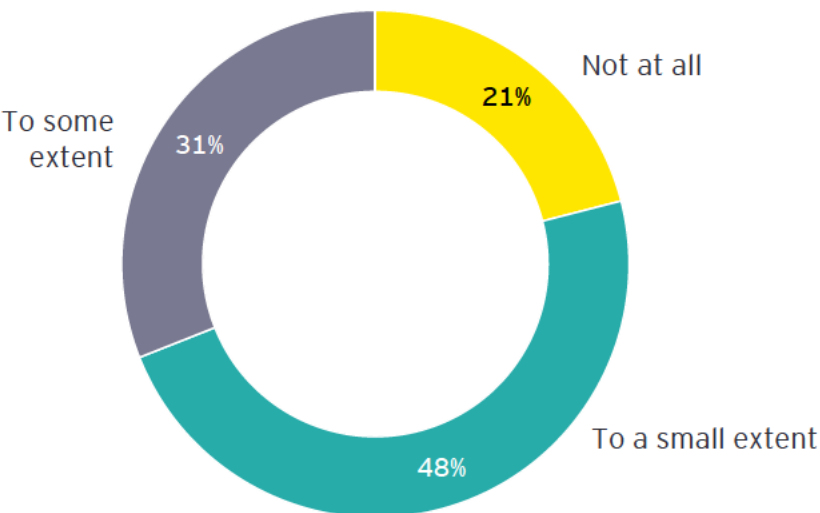
70%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement "interpersonal conflict is well managed at UNE"

Survey data: I have either witnessed or been a victim of bullying at UNE



Focus Group data: To what extent do you feel there are appropriate avenues to raise incidents, concerns, and questions about inappropriate behaviour



Theme 3:

United we stand. Divided we fall: 'The Business' vs 'The Academy'

When participants spoke about the University as an entity, there was a marked distinction made between 'the Academy', as making up the functional elements of the University and 'the Business', as the administrators of the University and non-academic staff. Many participants across all areas of consultation responded to indicate that there was no single unifying cultural identity in their experience of the University.

Overall, the Business was viewed as an external and highly commercialised administrative structure that was superimposed over the Academy. One which was largely perceived by those in the Academy to have little appreciation of or regard for, the work going on at the coalface. Whilst some participants acknowledged and, to a degree, accepted the necessity of a more commercialised approach to the running of universities given the sector-wide impacts (see *Background*), others considered the commercialisation as a threat to academia and associated the Business as driving an externalised economic rationalist agenda.

Despite there being some, albeit limited, acceptance and support for the current establishment, there was a clear notion of power imbalance between the Business and the Academy and 'Us vs Them'.

In this context, the Academy saw itself as being made up of keepers and defenders of the traditionalist ideals of what constitutes a university, at times in opposition to those of the Business.

Conversely, some participants belonging to the Business shared views of those in the Academy as living in the past and of being naïve to the commercial realities faced by the University.

The data illustrate a picture of division and competition, where there are pockets of cooperation between units, with no apparent collaboration. A mindset that threatens the success of the University's efforts to foster a healthy, safe and well culture at work.

This creates not only a difference in world view, but results in the setting up of a stage where there are winners and losers, and casualties that fall along the way. This 'Us vs Them' mentality pervaded every area of consultation across all levels of the University.

Your people said:

“

There also tends to be an "us versus them" culture, instead of everyone working together to produce the best outcome for students, staff and the community in general.”

“Breaking down the silos - each area is a law unto itself with protection of information making it difficult to move processes forward. There is a disconnect between business areas creating delays and friction between staff.”

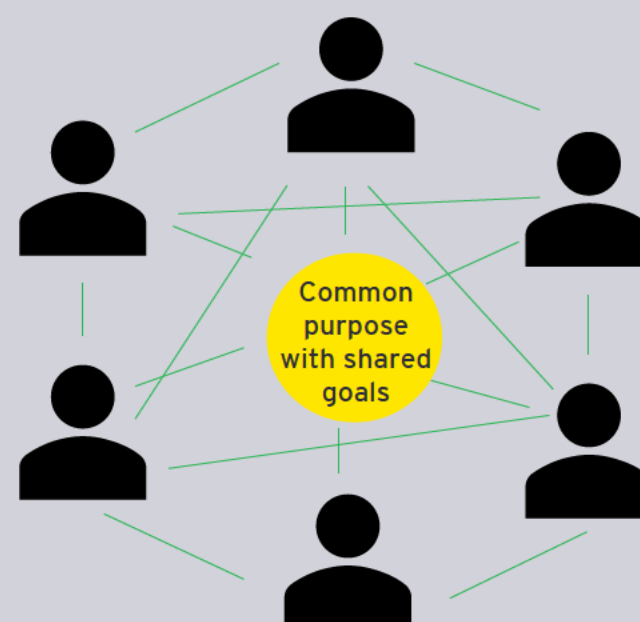
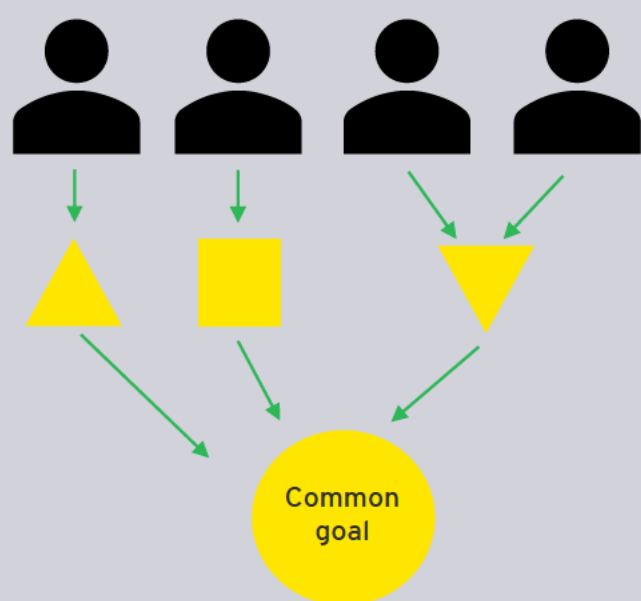
“In my view the single biggest change would be to improve relations between academics and executive staff.”

“A need to take some accountability, rather than thinking 'what's in it for me', start thinking about 'what's in it for the university', is what's being done for the greater good of UNE, rather than individual's own benefit? Shift from individual to community focus.”

“A sense of cohesion across areas - like the departments 'talk' and collaborate more, and not seem to compete or be superior to the others.”

“The academics can wilfully ignore advice or wilfully neglect to seek the advice of professional staff because the academics believe they already know best.”

Cooperation vs Collaboration



Whilst cooperation involves individuals or groups working alongside one another independently towards a common goal, collaboration, involves people working interdependently with a common alignment on purpose that connects to inherently shared goals/outcomes. The latter requires the integration of efforts, collective decision making and emphasises mutual accountability, deeper communication and can include iterative feedback loops.

Theme 4: Leadership Challenges vs Challenging Leadership

In all areas of consultation in the course of the current assessment, UNE leaders and leadership were noted as requiring significant attention.

There was a pervasive perception of executive leadership roles being a “stepping stone for outsiders”, as a stop on the path to someplace else.

There was a prevailing view, particularly amongst participants in the Armidale community, that those coming into the executive leadership team did so as a means to an end, pointing to brief periods of tenure for many in the executive.

Dissatisfaction with new leaders coming in with new ideas and then leaving, only to be replaced by new leaders with new ideas was common.

At the same time, there was a broadly acknowledged legacy of low trust in appointed leaders at the level of the Executive and Council by the remainder of the University workforce. A number of participants representing different levels and areas within the University community expressed the sentiment that any senior leader entering UNE was bound to be faced with cynicism, distrust and white anting.

Whilst many across the workforce pointed to challenging leadership, a number of long tenured staff in various roles and levels shared a perception that many colleagues across the Universities seek to actively undermine and sabotage leadership efforts.

Those who shared this sentiment identified such behaviour as actively contributing to the further erosion of trust and morale at the University, undermining collaboration, teamwork and the overall function of the University.

Your people said:

“

“The institution has plummeted rapidly and disastrously through atrocious leadership at every level.”

“No more micromanaging every decision.”

“A healthy culture would be modelled from the top, with leaders leading through the UNE values.”

“We have so many people in so called leadership positions that seem incapable or unwilling to actually engage in leadership.”

Whilst every group within an organisation is important and has a distinct role to play, leaders and leadership have a role that is paramount. Appointed leaders hold a non-transferrable obligation to rise to adaptive challenges and to bring staff clarity from ambiguity; to create alignment from dissent, to clear a path in the confusion.

Leaders shape and transform organisations. When they succeed in doing so, organisations are more likely to thrive and provide the conditions that foster a healthy, safe and well workplace culture.

64%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “leaders walk the talk, by consistently role modelling positive behaviours”

“

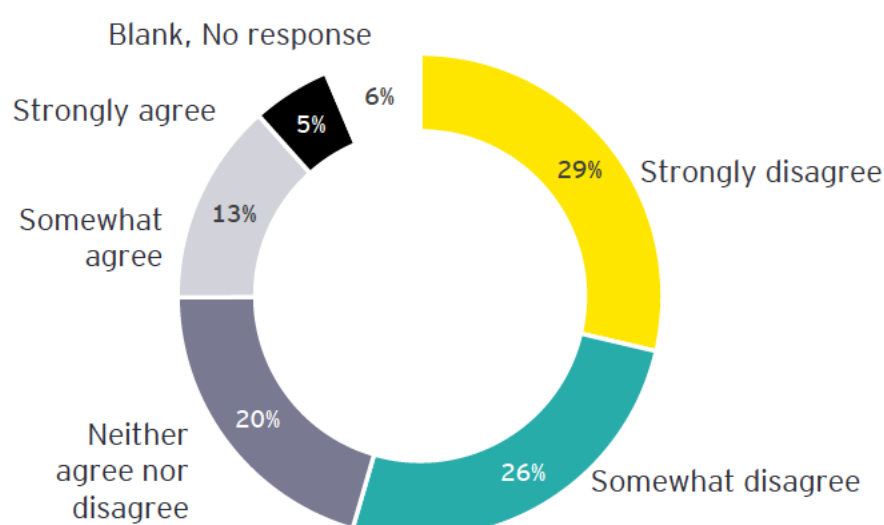
“A healthy culture would be modelled from the top, with leaders leading through the UNE values”

UNE staff member

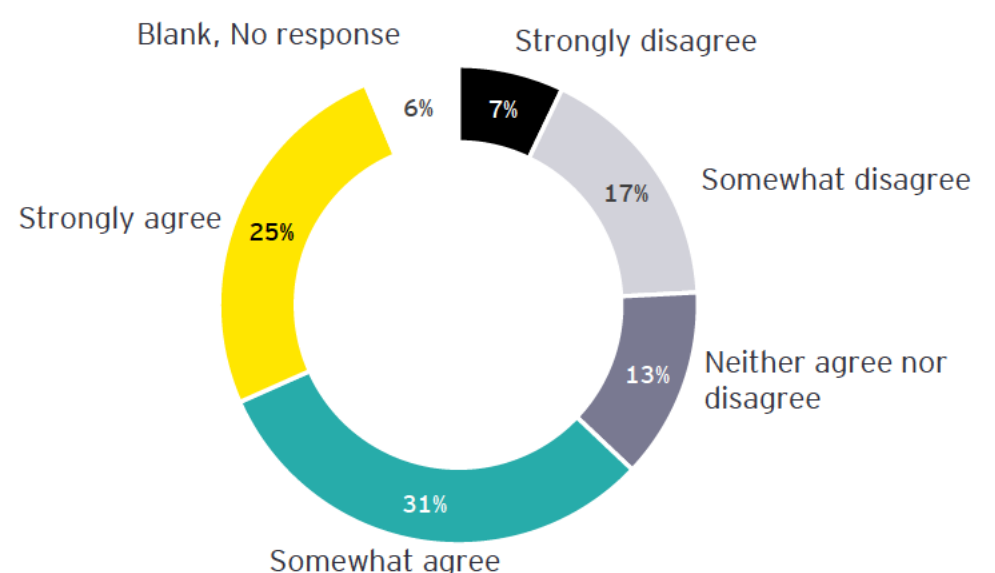
55%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “leaders at UNE show care for the HSW of the people who work here”

Survey data: Leaders act quickly and decisively when a HSW concern is raised



Survey data: Leaders do not recognise people for a job well done



Theme 5:
Selective process fixation, escalation culture and poor organisational discipline

Many participants pointed to challenges posed by perceived bureaucracy, inconsistent application of processes, policies and systems, many of which were perceived as ineffective or of low value.

Discussions across a number of focus groups indicated that participants were unclear on processes, particularly those that related to people grievances. Participants across several areas of consultation shared that they had ceased to engage with systems and processes to raise issues, as when they or others had done so in the past, the matter was not addressed in a timely manner or by someone appropriately skilled to be managing the grievance.

Several participants pointed to a culture of escalation and weaponisation of processes. Others reported feeling unsupported and punished for raising issues, or were directed to manage issues themselves.

Many participants pointed to experiences relating to processes, procedures and policies indicating poor behavioural adherence or interactions with these that appeared not to initiate any meaningful action.

Some commentary was provided in focus groups around weaponisation of process and selective process fixation. That is, inconsistent organisational adherence to these. This can take the form of an exaggerated focus or conversely, total lack of regard for, policies and procedures dependant on the individual to whom they are being applied. This resulted in a conclusion held by many, that policies and procedures can be misapplied.

For processes and systems to be reliable, they need consistent application, behavioural adherence and a workforce that engages with these in the manner intended. By prioritising organisational discipline, organisations can foster a HSW culture of continuous improvement, support efforts around H&S regulatory requirements, reduce H&S risk and embed responsibility and accountability across the matrix of the organisation.

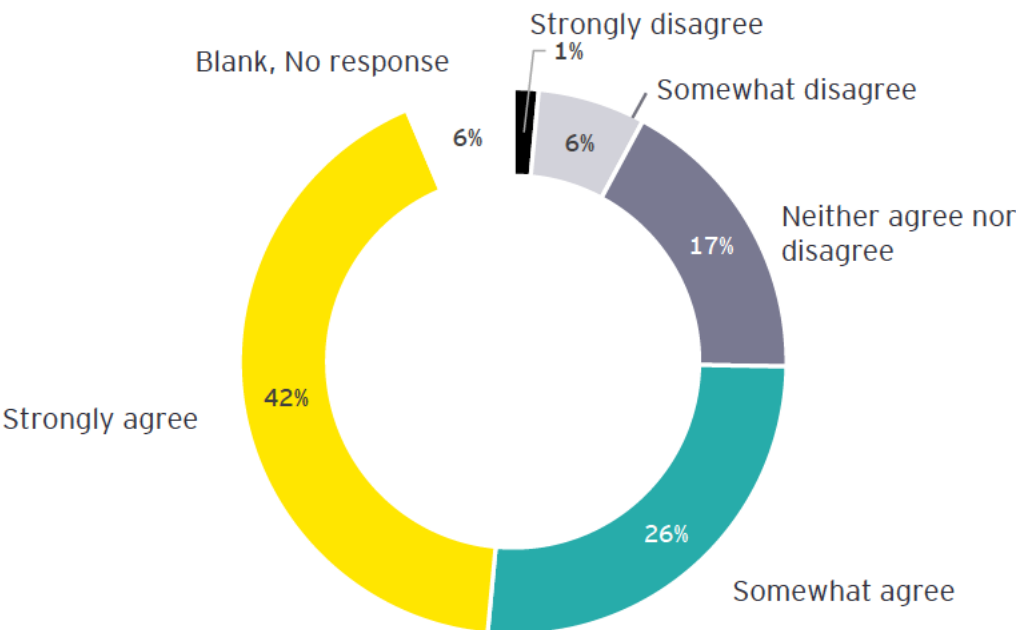
Your people said:

- “Stronger (better) leadership and supervision through simply following and applying appropriate policies and procedures.”
- “Staff are told they must be compliant and follow policies and regulations yet they (Senior Executives) are the worst at attempting to follow and meet the required legislation.”
- “Quick, efficient, decisive and transparent follow-through on policies.”
- “Active management of the toxic workplace culture and adequate repercussions for staff that align with clear and transparent policy and procedure.”
- “Implementing strong, transparent policies and procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment, and ensuring that these are consistently applied across the institution. This would involve providing clear guidelines and training for staff on how to recognise, report, and address such behaviour.”
- “Build a culture of trust, decentralised decision making and build fit for purpose processes.”

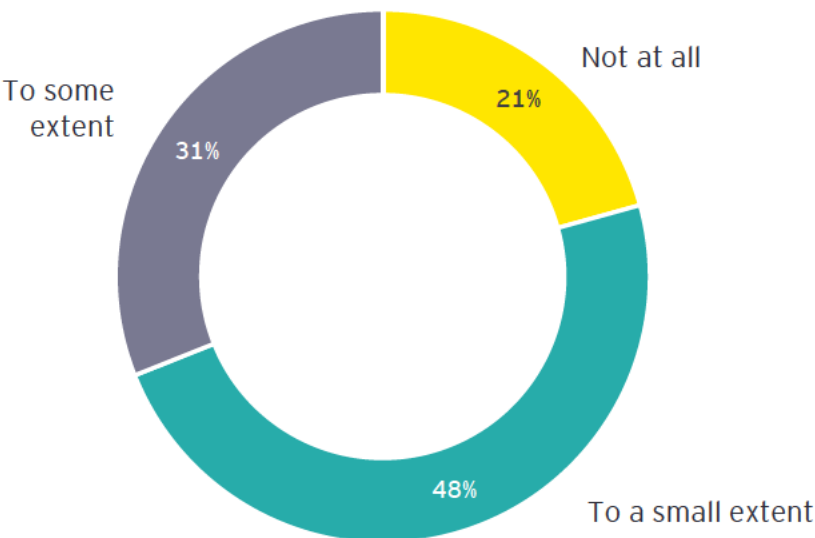
49%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement “leaders sometimes turn a blind eye when HSW processes are not followed”

Survey data: Fear of repercussion stops people from reporting issues that impact on HSW



Focus Group data: To what extent do you feel there are appropriate avenues to raise incidents, concerns, and questions about inappropriate behaviours?



Theme 6: Doing more with less: Workload and its organisation

Many participants spoke about the increasing workload experienced in the last few years both in the professional and the academic side of UNE. The perception that mounting workloads were associated with increasing work demands underpinned by a sense of needing to do more with less and being driven by the uncertain funding models and ongoing instability regarding sustainable funding.

Another element of this feedback was the notion that there is an increase in the complexity of work, as there was a view that there has been a contraction in the number of people employed by the university, meaning that individuals are undertaking elements of multiple roles.

Participants across many areas of UNE indicated that the ability to manage private commitments to be challenging, citing high workload and lack of resourcing are the main contributing factors infringing upon this. This effect was particularly pronounced in participants belonging to teaching groups. It was reported that peak periods frequently led to work overload and was typically managed reactively by outsourcing marking to casual/temporary staff.

Focus group participants across varying levels and functions indicated that performance expectations were excessive, however this generally did not extend to decision making. An exception to this was the management of interpersonal conflict, grievances and complaints for those in people management roles, who indicated that they were expected to manage complex people challenges without adequate training or capability in this area.

The survey results pertaining to induction, training, development and career progression were equivocal. There was a more or less even split in terms of perceptions on survey items and limited commentary on this across the remaining areas of consultation.

Excessive work demands have been called out as one of the significant hazards requiring management under the model WHS legislation. This requires employers to manage the risk of mental strain caused by work design and the way work is organised.

Your people said:

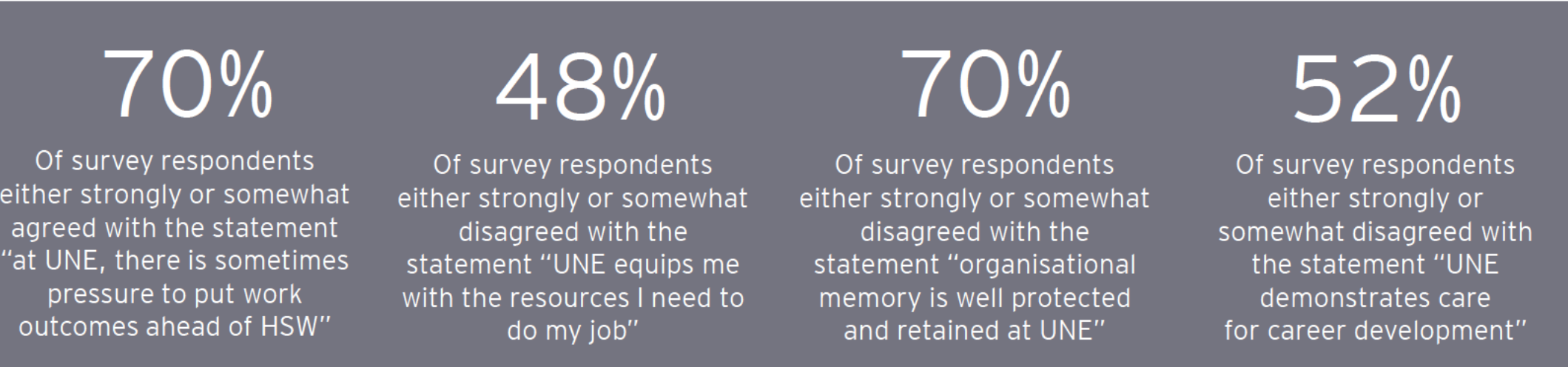
“An enforcement of workload changes for Professional and Academic Staff. If not enough work is done after this enforcement is made then its a problem of planning, expectations & lack of staff, not the individuals.”

“Implementing a fair workload policy and providing staff with the time, space and confidence to do their jobs properly.”

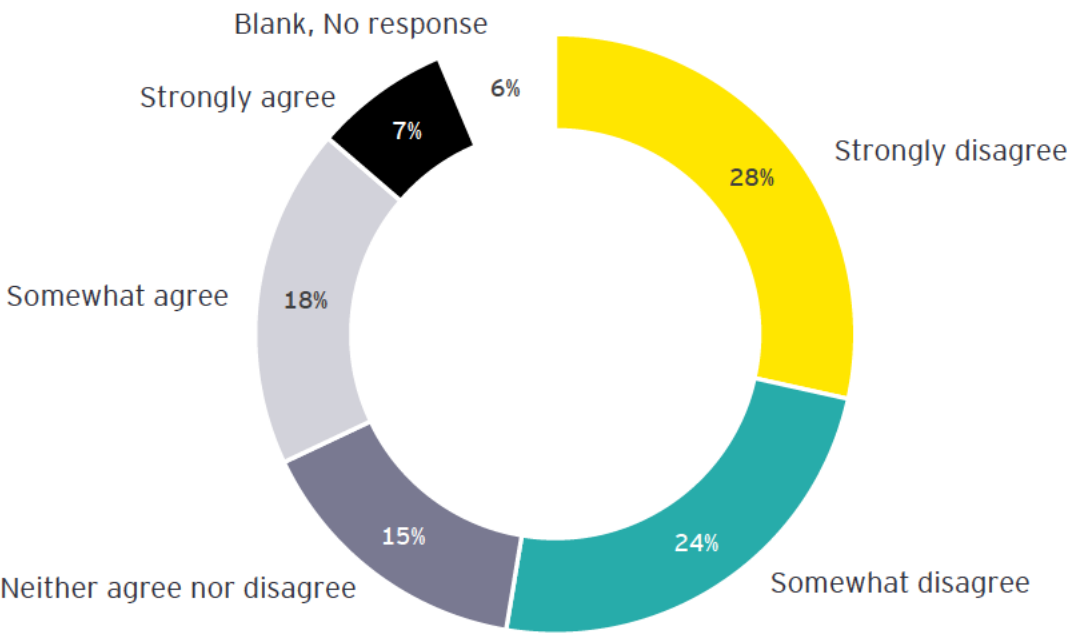
“...the absence of an academic workload model for the past 3 years seems to benefit management by allowing exploitation of staff, as there is no agreed method to quantify workload.”

“The employer needs to ensure the engagement of an adequate number of employees to cover the workload of the University rather than stretching remaining staff to the point of burnout and risking their mental and physical health.”

“How can you have decent work/life balance and feel valued when you're constantly being told you're not good enough/not working hard enough...enough is never enough...it's always "give more!"



Survey data: I am rarely challenged in balancing my private life with my work demands



Theme 7:
The silos are strong. The radio signal is weak.

An almost ubiquitous sentiment shared made by most participants, was the notion of a broken communication system where information flow is top down, disconnected and missing the opportunity to connect all levels of the organisation.

Many participants from different areas and levels within the University spoke to a need for opportunities to convey important messages upwards and sideways. There were few insights into how this could be supported, however participants pointed to a general lack of forums and mechanisms that could be utilised as avenues for wider engagement and consultation. This was particularly in relation to providing input and feedback around decisions that would impact the workforce.

The presence of defined siloes across the University was identified by many participants and was viewed as further impacting on the ability of the organisation to engage in effective cross functional communication.

On the basis of our consultation, there appears to be no overt and effective communication strategy that delineates how the different elements of communication will be applied to ensure alignment across the levels, functions and people of UNE. Particularly relating to the different elements of communication including audience, messaging, channels, tone and timing.

Generally, poor and siloed communication can lead to the alienation of individuals and groups within an organisation. It can also add to the sentiment of disconnection and lack of engagement that permeates the University's workforce.

Your people said:

“Communication with staff with meaning not just emails for the sake of emails, communication with substance.”

“Leadership should listen more to staff and communicate (and act) better on how critical feedback or concerns are addressed. UNE remains poor in dealing with conflicts.”

“We have not had a school meeting for 4 years. It feels as though the school is being run by a friendship group making decisions over dinner parties and private text messages.”

“For Leaders and the Executive Team to listen to the staff 'on the ground' i.e. academic and professional staff who are at the coalface of the day-to-day business of serving our students and our communities, and who are tasked with implementing organisational change.”

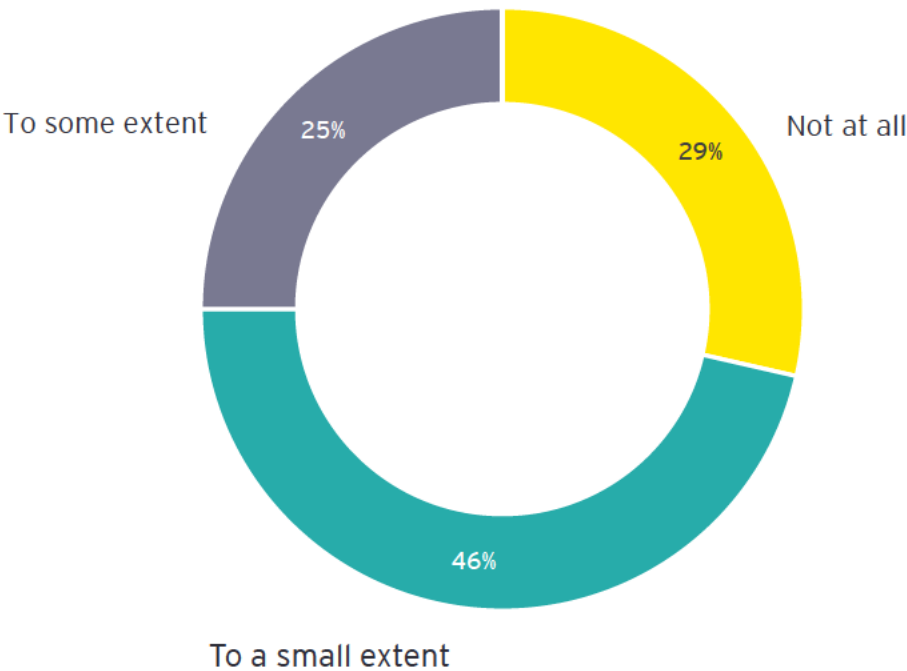
71%

Of focus group respondents who answered the question "To what extent is there transparent communication and consultation around decisions that impact UNE stakeholders?", answered "not at all"

54%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement "I feel empowered to positively influence performance at UNE"

Focus Group data: Extent that UNE encourage open and honest communication on HSW, and empower all levels to raise concerns?



Theme 8:
Governance, responsibilities and accountabilities: Creating
Clarity in The Mist

The view of many participants was that governance structures are highly hierarchical, overly complex, formal, inefficient, infective and lacking in transparency. 72% of respondents to the survey disagreed with the statement, “the executive team demonstrates good governance in making decisions that impact staff”. 66% of respondents to the survey disagreed with the statement, “UNE has a well documented operating model that is clear to all stakeholders”.

With this in mind, most participants pointed to a lack of clarity around their responsibilities for deliverables, versus who was to be held accountability for these. The result at scale, is a set of individuals unable to deliver, frustrated teams in search of a culprit and an organisation that cannot deliver on its stated outcomes.

Who is responsible for what and who is accountable to whom, are questions that require answering at every level of the University. Clarity on these two critical concepts will unlock many of the interrelation problems faced by UNE.

Responsibility without accountability leads to people being left to their own devices in the absence of feedback direction. Being held accountable for things one is not responsible for, is equally counterproductive.

When we clarify the extent of a person’s role and responsibilities by delineating their span of control and the magnitude of the task at hand together with identifying the accountable person, we set up a loop for the work to be reviewed, overseen and performed within a defined set of circumstances that create clarity improve performance and deliver results.

Defined roles and responsibilities, with denominated responsibilities and clear accountabilities, can be integral to supporting a positive HSW Culture. Benefits include, but are not limited to: the autonomy and empowerment afforded to individuals that is attached to having a clarity around the scope and authority attached to their role, reduction in conflict, reduced duplication of efforts, greater effectiveness and enhancement of collaboration.

Your people said:

- “Create a staff intranet to communicate faces, roles and responsibilities.”
- “...there has been a complete failure of governance.”
- “Implementation of a fairer governance model, in which academic staff are given equal representation in Council, its committees, and throughout the lower executive.”
- “We need to have a system of governance that effectively holds the executive accountable for their performance.”
- “Implement effective governance structure and decision-making processes.”
- “Put simply, UNE is unfixable unless it starts with the Governance.”
- “...we have been let down by our current governance structure.”

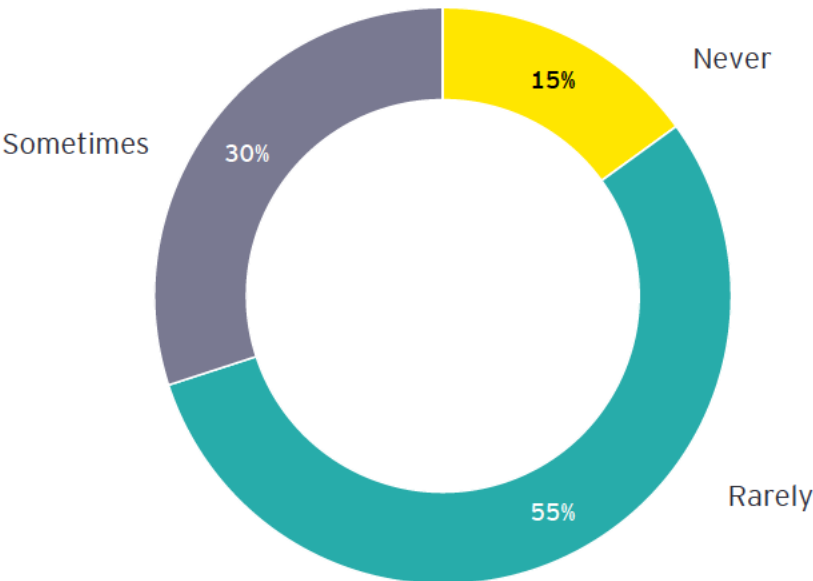
72%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “the executive team demonstrates good governance in making decisions that impact staff”

54%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “leaders act quickly and decisively when a HSW concern is raised”

Focus Group data: Are people at UNE held accountable for inappropriate behaviours?



Theme 9:
Change, Change Management and Initiative Fatigue

Time for Change was perceived by a large proportion of respondents to have been a poor example of navigating change at the organisational level. Many pointed to ineffective consultation, poor engagement and sub-optimal decisions, which resulted in the perception that the change was a purely cost cutting exercise, with clear winners and losers, together with increases in workload for most people across the organisation.

Many respondents pointed to Time for Change as being responsible for the most significant loss of organisational memory in the history of the University. In the focus group sessions, strong emotions were palpable as participants shared feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness when speaking about this particular initiative.

The context the University sector finds itself is in flux. It is a story of ongoing evolution, of finding relevance in a crowded market, of looking for differentiation and becoming a distinguished regional institution. The human impact of multiple episodic changes in response to structural pressures tells the story of change processes that have not always enabled individuals and groups within UNE to feel part of the future of the University.

How change is managed in an organisation affects everyone within it. However, those in appointed leadership positions play an important role in planning and shaping change. Similarly, the informal leaders of UNE need to be identified, involved and engaged in change management activities, for they play a significant role in the informal facilitation of large scale change and its acceptance. This includes, but is not limited to, dealing with resistance to change.

Your people said:

- “Time for change was an unmitigated disaster that made myself and others feel completely powerless.”
- “Time for Change not only cost the University a lot of money, tripled the workload of remaining staff but has had a detrimental impact on our reputation, staff, students and surrounding community.”
- “People have change fatigue.”
- “Stop spending obscene amounts of money on ridiculous projects and software that don't make any difference or make things worse. We don't mind change, but only if it is an actual improvement in efficiency and engagement.”
- “If there is a change to be made it needs to be discussed with the staff that it will impact before the implementation.”
- “Authenticity of executive in acknowledging that the biggest impact on culture was the devastation caused by the appallingly planned and executed Time for Change organisational restructuring which resulted in enormous loss of corporate memory and left remaining staff with impossible workloads, without the concomitant investment in technology and revised administrative processes to give well structured workload.”
- “Stable staff. So many experienced staff left or made redundant in the past few years. New staff lack the experience and training to do their jobs well. The outcome is that there is a void in the knowledge of the operation in almost every part of the university. This has significant impacts on the workload, satisfaction, and well-being of staff.”

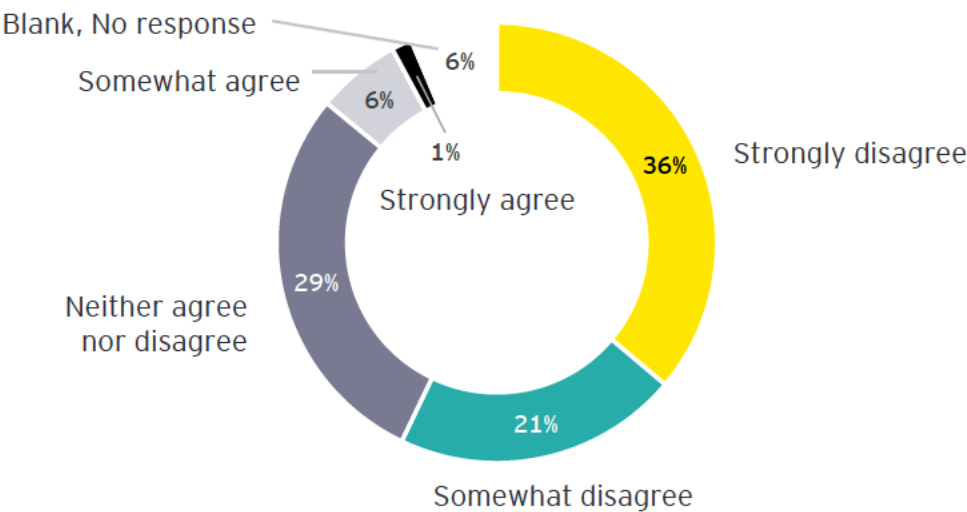
70%

Of survey respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement “change management processes at UNE enable staff to be engaged in the planning of change activities”

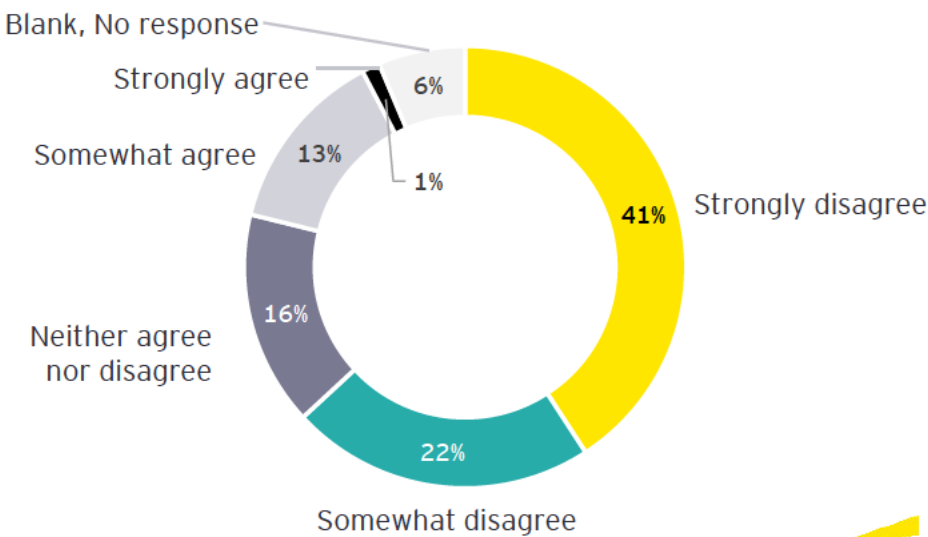
“Time for Change not only cost the University a lot of money, tripled the workload of remaining staff but has had a detrimental impact on our reputation, staff, students and surrounding community.”

UNE staff member

Survey data: Competing business activities have been considered when organisational changes take place at UNE



Survey data: Change management processes at UNE enable staff to keep informed around the implementation of change activities



Theme 10 : When the sum of the parts detracts from the whole

Whilst participants did not speak of integration directly, they often referenced the disjointed ways of working, the competing agendas, the cross purposed communications and what they are describing is indeed a state of poor integration across people, processes, and structures which makes the activities at hand difficult to implement.

The experience of many participants was that when we add the organisational pieces at UNE, this detracts from the whole instead, as these pieces don't integrate well due to a number of factors that can be largely summarised into:

- ▶ Organisational units do not appear to share a common purpose
- ▶ Values not embedded; values espoused are not being seen as observable behaviours and choices
- ▶ People and resources are pitted against each other in opposition rather than for collaboration
- ▶ Integration points are not well delineated and friction occurs at the intersectionality between functions, schools and other aspects of the structure
- ▶ Unclear or competing aims and objectives.

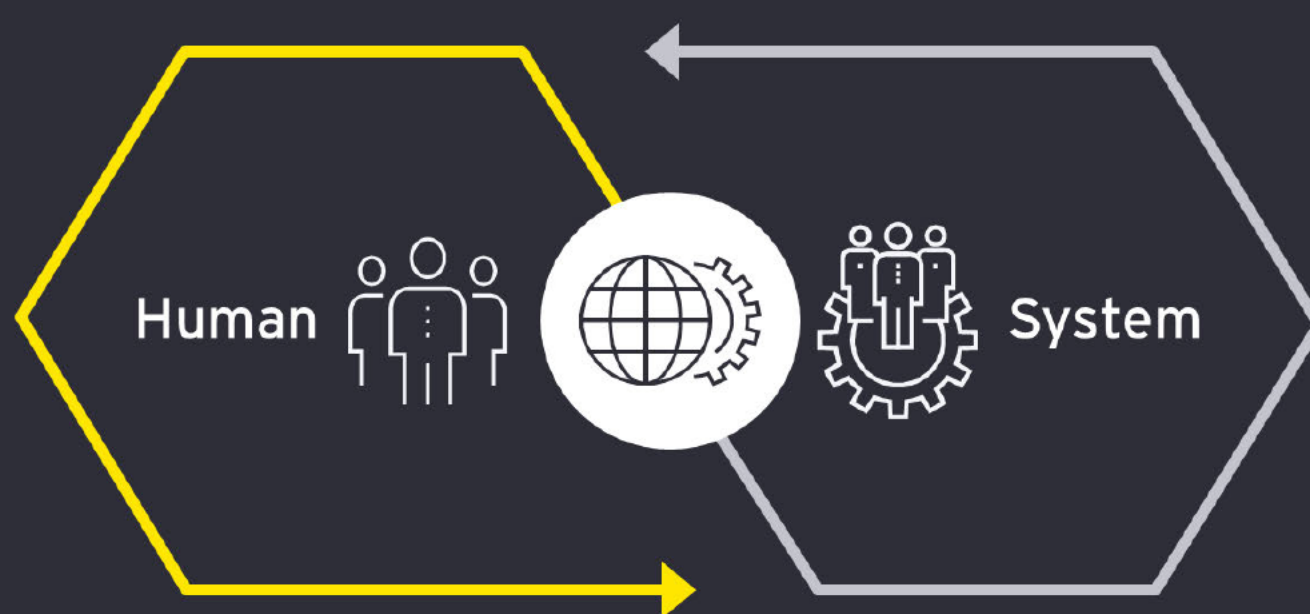
Integration speaks to the contribution that each organisational element makes to the quality and success of the whole. Within a well-integrated organisation, each element adds a unique and integral part, so that the whole becomes more than just a sum of its parts. Integration delivers the foundations for operational excellence and high performance.

Your people said:

“

Senior Executive acknowledging and addressing the real issues impacting UNE (understaffing, resource starvation, excessive bureaucracy, clunky unworkable organisation structure, excessive workloads, long-term tolerated incompetence at mid- and high levels, nepotism, flouting of proper process especially in some appointments at senior level, creation of notional senior positions that soak up significant funding but have no impact on taking the University forward).”

A future-fit HSW approach considers the interaction of humans and systems



Contributing Factors Matrix

Table 1.

Matrix of Organisational Contributing Factors with Associated Individual and Collective Impacts

Contributing Factors	Individual Impact			Collective Impact
	Cognitive (Think)	Affective (Feel)	Behaviours (Do)	Social (Norms)
▶ Perception of low people leadership capability across all levels ▶ Need for ownership, transparency and accountability ▶ Siloes and lack of bi-directional (vertical and horizontal) communication ▶ Unclear alignment with a clearly defined and articulates strategy and purpose ▶ Lack of a unified sense of identity ▶ Widespread perceptions of mismanaged organisational change ▶ Perception of lack of structures to support the workforce in terms of competition for resources and workload issues ▶ Widely shared perception across participants of role ambiguity, high role demands and with low control Low collaboration ▶ Widely shared perceptions of ineffective governance structures ▶ Many focus group participants spoke to policies, processes and procedures being disconnected from those they have been designed for ▶ A widely held perception of low collegiality outside of immediate and associated teams ▶ Participants from across the UNE community spoke to a general lack of ownership and accountability.	Dissonance created by what is expected of the University as an employer against the lived experience as an employee. Perceived lack of agency 'Us' vs 'Them' Cognitive overload Need for aligned purpose Confusion	Cynicism and negativity Helplessness Low morale Overwhelm Belonging Anger and frustration Disenchantment Disengagement	Counterproductive and unsafe behaviours: Incivility Bullying Harassment Intimidation Interpersonal conflict Low ownership and accountability Loss of initiative Retaliation and weaponisation of processes and systems	Blame culture Syndicated discontent Cliques: In-groups and out-groups A low-risk culture inhibiting of innovation Escalation culture

NB: The elements within the matrix do not correlate on a 1:1 basis with each other, as multiple associations exist between them



Opportunities for improvement

Opportunities for improvement

From the thematic analysis, seven key opportunities for improvement emerged in the following areas. These areas of focus help to frame and inform the recommendations of the assessment:

1. Leadership and leading capability
2. Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and ownership
3. Governance
4. Organisational justice
5. Siloes and disjointed communication
6. Systems and processes: integration with people
7. Organisational discipline.

The recommendations to address these can be found in Section 7 of this report.

Opportunity 1: Leadership and leading capability

We consider leadership to be a fundamental core driver of HSW culture change/transformation. Leaders translate the generalities of strategic intent into the granularity and specificity of tactical actions. They set the tone, the pace and provide opportunities and space for curiosity and feedback as these relate to health and safety. They are respectful of their legacy, whilst maintaining future focus and agility.

Our consultation found that there is a legacy culture of low trust in appointed leaders.

- Appointed Leadership: Widely held perception of distant leaders with high power distance, low visibility and limited bi-directional communication
- Widely held perception that there is a need for clear direction and alignment to an enduring strategic vision
- Many participants indicated that they did not believe that the behaviour they see, and the choices made at the University are aligned with the values espoused by UNE
- A widely held perception that there is a need for the empowerment of people, to replace power and control at UNE
- A broad perception across participants that leadership display inconsistent 'Skill and Will' to lead.

Opportunity 2: Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and ownership

It is our view that when employees have clearly articulated parameters in terms of what is expected of them in their roles, this can reduce frustration and ambiguity, whilst supporting engagement in conversations around boundaries in regard to tasks and the setting of expectations. Having such clarity can help to reduce conflict related to workload and tasks and can be utilised to enhance communication that relates to HSW with regard to the clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities. This also promotes teaming and effective collaboration and supports the effective distribution of work during times of change.

- Many participants across all areas of consultation indicated a perception of poorly distributed responsibility and accountability across UNE
- Many participants across all areas of consultation indicated that there are challenges at UNE around enablement to hold self and others to account, to taking responsibility and ownership of their work across the organisation
- Many participants expressed the need for acknowledgement at the organisational level of where things have gone wrong.

Opportunity 3: Governance

Adequate governance enable policies and procedures to be applied consistently, fairly and impartially across the organisation. Effective governance frameworks can provide safe mechanisms for reporting concerns, and addressing interpersonal conflict in a manner that protects individuals from retaliation. Transparency in decision making processes and access to information around how decisions are made and how feedback can be provided can reduce uncertainty and enhance trust.

- ▶ The data point to a culture of selective process fixation, formalisation, escalation and bureaucracy, where agility, collegiality and collaboration are needed
- ▶ Many participants indicated that structural organisational elements are disconnected from each other
- ▶ Governance was identified as an area requiring focus by many participants across the organisation, who pointed to highly hierarchical structures that are overly complex, formal, inefficient, ineffective and lacking in transparency.

Opportunity 4: Organisational justice

A psychologically safe environment is one in which people feel safe and confident to speak up, without fear of repercussions, when they experience or witness counterproductive behaviour, provide feedback to the organisation or individuals within it or when they challenge hierarchy or raise HSW concerns. Respect and trust are fundamental to a healthy, safe and well workplace culture. Leaders must role model inclusive and respectful behaviours to set a behavioural standard, whilst empowering others to speak up.

- ▶ Many participants expressed a need for respect, integrity, ethics and collegiality to replace incivility, counterproductive behaviours and perceived favouritism
- ▶ Many participants indicated a need to build lost trust through lived values, transparency, organisational justice and meritocracy.

Opportunity 5: Siloes and disjointed communication

The importance of integrated enterprise-wide communications cannot be overstated in the pursuit of improving HSW culture.

Communication serves as the most significant lever for alignment on purpose, strategic intent and to call the organisation to action. It can serve to invite dialogue and to support bi-directional exchanges of information that serve to keep the organisation focused on what is important.

- ▶ Many focus group participants shared the opinion that communications are top down, siloed and contrary to the aim of providing strategically anchored, integrated and supportive messaging
- ▶ Active acknowledgement, response to and management of the repercussions of perceived lack of consultation in times of change
- ▶ Whilst effective communication provides reinforcement of information loops to key messages at specific and timely intervals, this was contrary to the reported experiences of many participants.

Opportunity 6: Systems and processes: integration with people

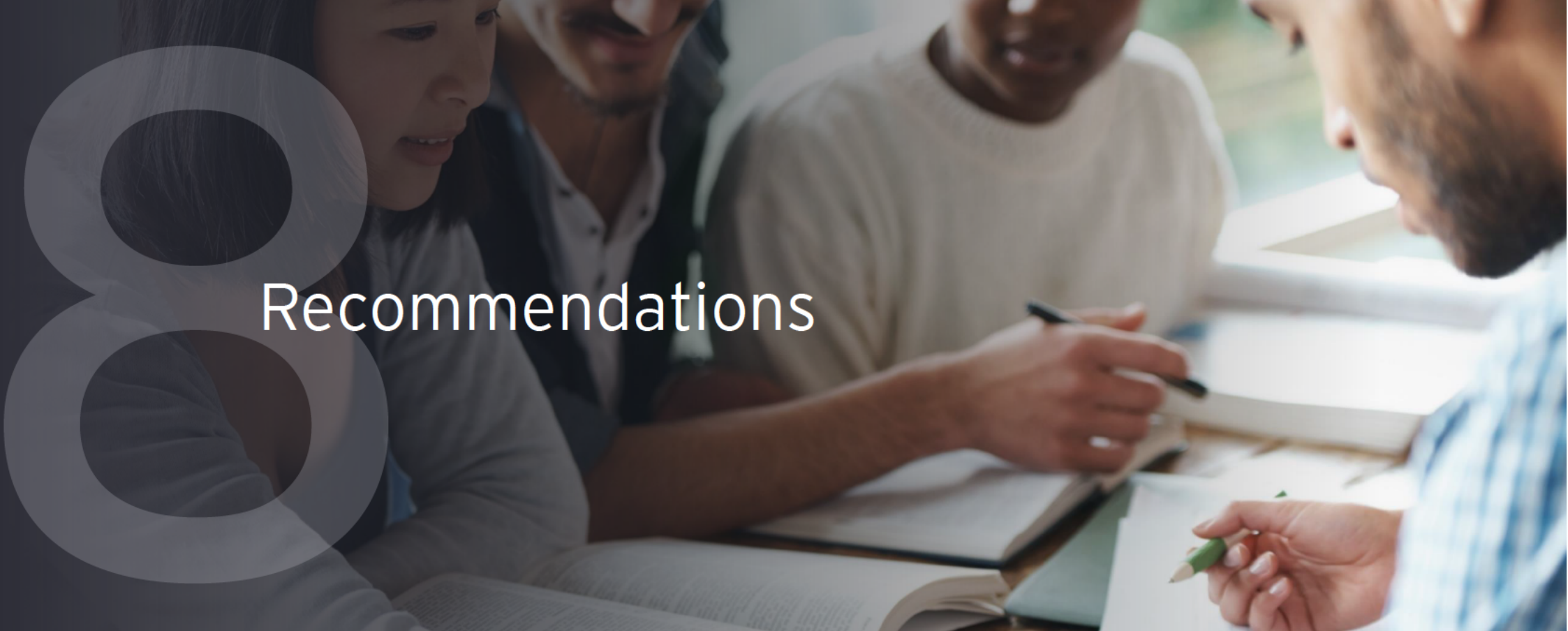
Fit for purpose policies, processes and systems are important mechanisms to support a healthy, safe and well workplace culture. They exist to clearly articulate expectations around behaviours. When integrated effectively with people, they support consistency across the organisation, ensure compliance and aid the pursuit of continuous improvement.

- ▶ Whilst documented policies, processes, procedures and systems exist, consultation with participants indicated poor integration of these with people. There is low workforce awareness of these and associated alternative formal and informal resolution avenues
- ▶ There exists a culture of selective process fixation and procedural complaint raising
- ▶ Many participants pointed to the grievance and complaints handling process as a source of concern, due to perceived lack of procedural fairness, natural justice and poor timeliness, resulting in low trust of findings from the process
- ▶ A need for a clearly defined process in relation to independent workplace investigations for relevant categories of allegations
- ▶ Several focus group participants shared concerns around the appropriateness of certain grievance management responsibilities falling on individuals who they believed lacked the skill or will to manage such grievances.

Opportunity 7: Organisational discipline

Organisational discipline is important for setting a tone of integrity, ensuring consistency and fostering responsibility and accountability across an organisation. Trust, respect and fairness are fostered when the people of an organisation see discipline upheld consistently which in turn supports HSW workplace culture. Organisational discipline overtime creates operational excellence as it drives consistency and reliability of organisational inputs and stability of outputs.

- ▶ Variability and lack of reliability in the routines, structures and cadences for organisational expectations to be set and key messages cascaded throughout the organisation.



Recommendations

Recommendations

Based on the opportunities for improvement identified in section 6, recommendations were developed comprising of:

- ▶ High level strategic recommendations with a longer term and broader view appear first, followed by;
- ▶ Specific tactical recommendations that respond to narrower short term or immediate needs or address current problems.

Priority Areas:

- ▶ Rebuild Culture of Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety
- ▶ Proactively mitigate psychosocial risks through controls with following focal points: Workload, Leadership and Counterproductive behaviours
- ▶ Deploy targeted Psychological Safety based interventions.

The following strategic recommendations have been identified and are detailed in this section:

1

Develop and connect UNE's people to a galvanising and enduring Purpose and Strategy into which Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety are interwoven

2

Build safety leadership capability across all levels of the organisation

3

Create a Movement for Change

4

Develop internal supports and conduct further internal reviews into the governance, systems and ways of work at UNE to increase HSW

5

Develop and maintain person-centred work design and practices.

Recommendation 1: Develop and connect UNE's people to a galvanising and enduring Purpose and Strategy into which Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety are interwoven

Council and the Executive to navigate the complex landscape of competing demands and support the development of a galvanising and enduring purpose and strategy that prioritises Psychological Safety and Trust and Respect, as fundamental to a healthy workplace culture. It is recommended that the UNE Values be reviewed in light of this Purpose and Strategy. The HSW Change/Transformation strategy should be embedded into this.

1.1 Individualised Executive debriefing sessions

- ▶ Hold individualised debriefing sessions of this report with the Executive group
- ▶ Such sessions would provide an opportunity for members of the Executive to deeply understand the content of this report, whilst also offering a time and place for self reflection on their contribution to the As-Is HSW culture state and the ways in which they can move towards the desired future state.

1.2 Non executive debriefing and alignment sessions

- ▶ Debrief the Council and any other non-executive leadership group above the Executive level on this report
- ▶ Engage in discussion on a broad way forward to be led by executive team

1.3 Develop or redefine Strategy and Roadmap

- ▶ Clarify and/or redefine the strategic direction of the University through the development of a new strategy, or revision of existing strategy to embed a HSW change/transformation strategy in consultation with UNE's Council where appropriate
- ▶ An envisioning of the future is incomplete without a road-map that clearly stipulates the steps and milestones needed to get to the desired future state, including the choices that need to be made and the tradeoffs that will underpin these choices. All choices have consequences and for these the team must be prepared.

1.4 Executive alignment and commitment sessions

- ▶ Develop and hold alignment and commitment sessions across the Executive group on their role in HSW culture change/transformation focusing on: skill, will and application
- ▶ True alignment to the UNE purpose and strategy, including the HSW change/transformation strategy, at the executive leadership level is a pre-requisite for alignment to occur at other levels of the University.

Recommendation 2: Build safety leadership capability across all levels of the organisation

Increase safety leadership capability of leaders throughout the organisation. As an overarching principal, implementation of these recommendations should be leader led, with ownership by each leadership level to coach, mentor and develop the level below them. Such an approach needs to be supported by a fit for purpose coaching framework, training and skill building activities, with external support where required.

The approach should reinforce executive responsibility to lead the change/transformation and development process within their teams, understand the gaps and tailor the development to meet individual needs.

Professional development across all areas of leadership will support HSW culture change/transformation. Specifically, in the areas of clear and open workplace communications, conflict resolution and leadership development.

2.1 Leadership competency framework

- ▶ Define a competency framework outlining the key leadership and functional competencies and capabilities required to build the target culture and to lead for Psychological safety.

2.2 Leadership Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

- ▶ Perform a Training Needs Analysis tailored to relevant leadership roles within UNE.

2.3 Leadership training framework

- ▶ Design and develop a training framework, content, delivery method and review timeframes
- ▶ Deploy instructional design methods to assess, design, build and evaluate HSW change/transformation learning journey, with the purpose of engaging individual teams and leaders in the specific aspects of this work at all levels of the University
- ▶ Depending on it's design, the learning journey may encompass 1:1 coaching, facilitated group activities such as workshops, round table discussions and feedback sessions.

Recommendation 3: Create a Movement for Change

Deployment of a formalised organisation-wide framework for conducting cultural change and its management is recommended. There are a number of methodologies available that focus on the process of change management. We note care needs to be devoted to the purpose of the change. It is recommended that UNE considers the appropriateness of undertaking a HSW Culture Transformation. It is noted that transformation entails higher risks than change management approaches, as it is necessarily more iterative, experimental and is undertaken with lesser predictability. Decisions pertaining to transformation efforts ought to be informed by the University's risk appetite, budgetary constraints and assessed overall readiness for transformation.

Just as HSW culture transformation is not BAU for leaders, this is also the case for the rest of the organisation. Therefore, there is a need to develop capability of a central and key group of influencers, who can be called upon to act as cultural ambassadors and connectors of people across all levels of the organisation. The importance of a bottom up, multi-team and multi level approach cannot be overestimated to transform organisations from within. Consideration should be given to seek external SME support to enable and maintain this process.

3.1 Governance structures

- Establish a clear Governance Structure to provide direction and oversight to the culture change/transformation process. This should clearly indicate roles and responsibilities and engage an experienced project manager to oversee the delivery of the HSW culture change/transformation activities program of works.

3.2 Establish working group

- Convene a working group made up of a cross section of individuals across the organisation. Ideally, these people should be well respected members of the academy, professional staff, together with some senior leadership representation. The main purpose of this group is to sense check the multiplicity of possible interventions that could be rolled out at any given time, to help contextualise any learning materials and to provide feedback to the selection of participants
- This group should be enabled to have significant input to the decision making on content, timing, and design of a HSW culture intervention.

3.3 Development and rollout of the Cultural Change/Transformation Program

- Assess the appropriateness of and develop an organisation-wide HSW cultural change/transformation program
- Deploy instructional design and create a facilitated learning journey for leaders aimed at increasing capability to create Psychological Safety. Deploying Psychological Safety Leadership Circles. These circles bring together several leaders at a time to work on predetermined learning outcomes where they can learn important safety leadership concepts, apply new skills and behaviours and reflect on their own impact as leaders of the University
- In addition to the working group, there is a need to identify and embed change agents within UNE to support: design, development, roll out, ongoing support and communications, taking into account workload to act in this role.

3.4 Reporting mechanisms and Project Management

- Establish reporting mechanisms for the HSW culture change/transformation program including:
 - The timing and milestones for the program of works
 - Deployment of a PMO to ensure milestones are traced and progress is made against the plan
 - Monitor and review HSW performance and culture at adequate timeframes (see also Recommendation 5), through a variety of mechanisms including leading and lagging HSW performance indicators such as: Active leadership participation - training, meetings, coaching sessions (leading) and incidents, workers compensation cases, number of grievances, resolution time for complaints etc (lagging).

Recommendation 4: Develop internal supports and conduct further internal reviews into the governance, systems and ways of work at UNE to increase HSW

Review and address shortcomings in systems and processes and how these interact together with people. This requires further investigation to understand whether issues are with the processes themselves, behavioural compliance with the processes and systems, ineffective outcomes, or a combination of all these factors before formulating solutions that are tailored for maximum effectiveness. Three priority areas of focus for consideration are: People and Culture processes, Workload, and HSW management system processes.

People and Culture processes

Performance management processes shape and reinforce an organisation's culture. When working to improve HSW culture it is more effective to reward and recognise leading indicators of good performance rather than lagging indicators such as performance statistics or target reductions. Review and refine professional development and performance management processes, including processes associated with reward and recognition, to align to the renewed UNE cultural and strategic objectives.

Workload management and assessment

Address workload concerns through a workload assessment and the development of a workload management process. This assessment should take into consideration the known limitations of human capacity for attention, short term memory, speed of processing and other determinants of ability in this area.

HSW Management Systems

Ensure UNE's HSW management system (including policies, procedures and codes of practice) is updated and adequately implemented. This includes the continuation of progress made in the development of a psychosocial risk management framework, policies and procedures, and competency matrix. The HSW management system updates under the psychosocial safety compliance project aim to mitigate risks related to workload, change management, poor support, and inappropriate workplace behaviours. Effectively implementing and embedding these processes will support the HSW culture change/transformation and manage UNE's top psychosocial risks.

4.1 People and Culture processes

- Review and refine professional development and performance management processes to align to the UNE purpose and strategy (see Recommendation 1). This should include the design of relevant reward and recognition metrics such as:
 - The level to which individuals live out the organisational values
 - The time leaders devote to 1:1 conversations
 - The quality of the feedback given and received within the organisation
 - Improvement to the quality of safety within UNE (safety perception survey)
 - The efficiency in which grievances and concerns are closed out to the satisfaction of all parties.

4.2 Workload management and assessment:

- Develop and implement a workload management process
- Cognitive task analyses should be considered to capture baseline levels that assess a range of cognitive demands of various roles and work conducted at UNE as it pertains to volume (how much) work pace (how fast), how cognitively taxing (how complex), the requirements pertaining to interruptions and the degree of task switching (cognitive set and reset)
- Assess and ongoingly monitor academic and non-academic workload using best practice cognitive load measurement, and ensure that workloads are equitably, effectively and sustainably managed, with due regard for the limitations of human attention
- Consider the development of job dictionaries informed by cognitive task analyses.

4.3 HSW Management System:

- Continue the update to the HSW management systems in accordance with the development of policies and procedures within the psychosocial risk management framework
- Ensure adequate training through roll-out to ensure processes are embedded within UNE
- Monitor HSWMS implementation through adequate assurance mechanisms
- Assess the need for an improved incident reporting digital solution for staff and students (including concerns, grievance and complaint handling (See recommendation 5).

Note: The work completed to date to update the policies and procedures under the psychosocial risk management could be leveraged to update the concern, complaints and grievance handling process.

Recommendation 5: Develop and maintain person-centred work design and practices

People need to be placed at the centre of processes and approaches tailored to ensure that individuals receive the right amount of support and information for their situation, which may vary in complexity each time. This is of particular importance when considering: communication, grievance and complaints handling and counterproductive workplace behaviours.

Communications plan

Person-centred practices should be applied to matrix the elements of communication to the best possible outcome. What to communicate (content), how to communicate, voice, tone, channels and messaging (process) and who is being communicated with (audience). Finally considering when to communicate (timing).

Develop (or revise) a communication plan that details and schedules carefully crafted messages through a matrix of channels, together with a rolling timeline to shift and embed key mindsets that relate to Trust, Respect and Psychological Safety and which aligns with the broader UNE roadmap and implementation plan. Bi-directional channels of communication will need to be created through feedback seeking, surveys and other forms of consultation to ensure communication is balanced.

Once the strategy and roadmap are agreed upon, a communication strategy and plan designed to obtain much needed buy-in, will be needed to communicate across the HSW cultural change/transformation narrative, via all available channels. These may include: town halls, formal announcements, email and word-of-mouth. Applying a person-centred communication strategy will emphasise effective communication between UNE management and employees, and support the rebuilding of trust through transparent and frequent communication.

Concerns, complaints and grievance handling

Concerns, grievances and complaints processes exist and could benefit from improvement. The challenge rests in the implementation and adherence to principles of natural justice. To this end, person-centred principles need to be considered. This will ensure that individuals who raise concerns or lodge complaints are treated with respect and dignity. The procedure should be updated to ensure processes are fair, transparent and timely.

An individualised approach must also be taken for each case as each is unique and may require tailored solutions. The internal investigation of senior leaders in an organisation requires particular care. In-house investigators may not be able to maintain impartiality due to their alignment with the organisation and a perceived vested interest in preserving its reputation. The procedure should include clear guidance around the circumstance under which investigations should be conducted by an external third-party.

Counterproductive behaviours

A targeted communication strategy (see also Communication) to communicate expectations around workplace behaviour, along with clearly articulated examples of what behaviours are considered to be unacceptable. Bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination should be included, along with the impacts of these.

Increase inter-responsibility for health and safety across the workforce when it comes to stepping up and calling out inappropriate behaviours through targeted interventions such as bystander or upstander training. This should be supported by providing leaders at all levels with upskilling and capability to role model positive workplace behaviours and to actively address unacceptable behaviour.

Improve behavioural adherence to fit for purpose policies that relate to counterproductive workplace behaviours.

In addition to aforementioned recommendations (see Recommendation 2), pertaining to HSW culture leadership through role modelling, trust in the processes, policies and systems needs to be re-established. To increase confidence in reporting and complaints systems it is recommended that:

There are safe and where appropriate, confidential mechanisms for reporting incidents of counterproductive behaviours and incidents involving bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination that are independent of the People and Culture function.

5.1 Communications Plan

- ▶ Develop or revise a communication strategy and plan, including:
 - ▶ A detailed approach to messaging including: content, process, audience, timings and schedules of communications
 - ▶ Matrix of communication channels including bi-directional communication channels
 - ▶ Use the communications plan to develop a communication strategy and plan to communicate the strategy and roadmap to obtain employee buy-in.

5.2 Concerns, grievance and complaint handling

- ▶ Revise approaches to concern, grievance and complaint handling and reporting to incorporate person-centred practices and detail the application of the following principles:
 - ▶ Fairness and transparency
 - ▶ Mechanisms to maintain confidentiality (where appropriate)
 - ▶ Diligence requirements
 - ▶ A requirement for clear articulation of what rules/policies the respondent is alleged to have breached
 - ▶ Stipulation around rights of reply
 - ▶ Confidential mechanisms for reporting (including whistleblower process)
 - ▶ Document, for those matters in which investigation is deemed appropriate:
 - ▶ Skills required of investigator, by case complexity and seniority of respondent
 - ▶ Guidelines for assessment of impartiality of a proposed investigator
 - ▶ Guidelines for assessment of independence of a proposed investigator.

Recommendation 5: Develop and maintain person-centred work design and practices (continued)

5.2 Concerns, grievance and complaint handling (continued)

The senior-most leaders of an organisation can be reasonably expected to apply a consistent high standard of conduct. The impacts on the HSW culture of inappropriate behaviour displayed by leaders can be spread throughout an organisation given that the workforce looks to those in senior leadership roles to gauge what interpersonal conduct is considered acceptable to the organisation.

- ▶ It is recommended that the University considers the appropriateness of a default appointment of external investigators for investigations of serious allegations against the Council and members of the Executive.

5.3 Bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination

- ▶ Develop a targeted communications strategy pertaining to expected workplace behaviours
- ▶ Deliver bystander or upstander training
- ▶ Deliver leadership training in:
 - ▶ Zero tolerance for bullying and sexual harassment
 - ▶ How to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, sexual harassment and other counterproductive behaviours
- ▶ Consider the production of a dedicated employee handbook that combines Code of Conduct with relevant information, direction to policies, procedures and processes that pertain to UNE's stance on bullying, sexual harassment and other counterproductive behaviours.

5.4 Improve behavioural adherence to fit for purpose policies that relate to counterproductive workplace behaviours.

- ▶ The aforementioned safe mechanism for support and/or reporting should be managed in an appropriate area of the University by specialist staff with relevant expertise in bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and trauma informed practices
- ▶ Provide support to complainants, should they consent to a formal investigation, throughout the duration of the investigation process. This can include direction to relevant community health resources when appropriate
- ▶ Gather data insights (this could include tracking timeliness, outcomes of investigations, trends across the University and responses to these) and regularly present quarterly metrics to the Executive and Council. The risk owner for psychosocial risk may wish to assess the appropriateness of working such metrics into RAS reporting or the University's risk management framework if this is considered appropriate
- ▶ Develop an avenue by which members of the UNE community can have a conversation and seek advice prior to commencing down a pathway of formal reporting should they wish
- ▶ Ensure that the University proactively manages concerns and fears around complainants being compelled to continue to work in close physical proximity to or have regular digital interaction with someone they have reported to have bullied or harassed them
- ▶ Develop and implement mechanisms that ensure investigations are managed effectively, sensitively and in a timely manner (see also Concerns, complaints and grievance handling).

Implementation roadmap

The proposed [implementation roadmap](#) outlines strategic and tactical recommendations for UNE's consideration. Delivery timeframes will vary depending on the delivery model and program of works defined by UNE. The Assess, Design, Deliver and Evaluate steps are transferable and lend themselves to adaptation.

Assess

Take EY report as input conduct organisational level appraisal and prioritisation process to plan an intervention focused on addressing the main issues pertaining to HSW cultural performance at UNE.

This process should have wide participation from leaders and contributors at all levels of the organisation.

Choose from the list of recommendations which ones are likely to have the largest impact in proportion to the required effort.

Reach alignment on a way forward.

In summary the areas of focus are:

- Strategy, Vision and Identity
- Align
- Prioritise/ make choices
- Be aware of the tradeoffs
- Form a project team
- Fund the intervention.

Design

Once the organisation has arrived at a strategic implementation plan for improvement of safety culture, engage the whole organisation in the development of a targeted process of selecting focused improvement project relating to the cultural priorities chosen.

These should be written down with measurable SMART goals to enable tracking and progress.

Monitoring tools and data inputs will need to be established and dashboards built at the end of the planning process when decision on the priorities and program management have been made.

The Intervention plan should be engaging and easily available to all who wish to contribute participate or be informed.

Select partners to the delivery of the HSW culture improvement program of works, with due recognition as to the skill level required in the inhouse versus consulting outsourced programs.

Create success measures for review of progress.

Deliver

Work with inhouse resources and third party providers and consultants to orchestrate the delivery of the program of works.

The particulars and timelines around the execution and completion of planned initiatives will depend greatly on the chosen program of works, their scope and whether the work is in-sourced, co-sourced or outsourced.

Planning and coordination will be required with clear goals established, defined scopes, timelines, milestones, the implementation of quality assurance measures and metrics, resourcing and stakeholder engagement.

PMO's for each project should ensure clearly defined objectives, milestones, budget tracking and timely completion of deliverables.

Evaluate

By starting with the end in mind, UNE will be in a good position to evaluate against success measures that have been predetermined in the design phase.

Deploy Kirkpatrick model of evaluation, aiming for Level 4 impact which seeks to make significant contribution at the highest possible level, that of organisational return on investment.



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NB: The particulars of the roadmap will be largely dependant on the appetite for change, the rate and pace of the transformation and the leadership appetite to engage with third party providers versus inhouse resources.

Data and Dashboards will need to be built at the end of the planning process when decisions on the priorities and program management have been made.

Recommendations Implementation Roadmap





Concluding remarks

This report provides a view of the HSW current state, in addition to recommendations regarding the critical aspects of a way forward to support the development of a healthy, safe and well workplace culture at UNE.

The EY team thanks UNE and all participants who contributed to the Assessment for sharing their experiences with openness and candour, along with their views on a path forward. In addition to seeking to inform, this assessment can act as a catalyst for the change or transformation of UNE's HSW culture across the organisation.

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