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REPORT

TRADITIONS, PRACTICES, INVOLVEMENT AND INPUT OF

OLD BOYS & OLD GIRLS

TO THE CULTURE AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

AT

JANE FRANKLIN HALL

JUNE 2024

JOCELYN SPARKS INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

This report has been redacted where necessary to protect the identity of individuals.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 REASONS FOR AND PURPOSE OF REVIEW

In March 2024 the Jane Franklin Hall (JFH) Principal and Dean of Students (Jane management) were advised by first-year female residents about incidents involving 'hazing'¹ type behaviour which had occurred during Welcome Week, carried out by second year residents and former residents (old boys/old girls).

reporting students had not been subjected to or witnessed events but had heard from a male student what the first-year boys had been required to do.

reporting student had been subjected to an initiation 'ceremony' for girls.

The Principal notified me in my capacity as Director of the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Safe and Fair Community Unit (SAFCU)².

We discussed the options to manage this information, taking into consideration the University's Behaviour Policy and Procedure, Jane's own policies and procedures and potential reporting to Tasmania Police of any criminal offences. I advised that more information was required before we could determine an appropriate way to manage the matter.

We also discussed appropriate wellbeing support for the affected students.

Jane management took statements from reporting students and made enquiries of the Student Club Committee (SCC) to try to ascertain more details.

Upon review of the information gathered, I advised that an investigation under the UTAS Behaviour Procedure by SAFCU would not be practical or lead to a constructive outcome.

From my experience as an investigator generally and from managing matters under the UTAS complaint-handling framework, a punitive approach would inevitably be seen by students as directive and, therefore, ineffective. In my view, it would be unlikely to stop the behaviours, rather to reinforce the acceptability and attractiveness of being inducted into a secret and elite group, and drive the behaviour underground in future years.

¹ <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazing</u>

² As Director, I was responsible for Student Safety & Wellbeing, managing the University's counselling service, complex case management (primarily serious mental health presentations), complaint handling and disciplinary investigations. My portfolio was heavily engaged with students, staff and management in Student Accommodation and I worked closely on safety matters with campus Security. My role included management of serious harm, including suicide prevention and postvention.

1.2 ENGAGEMENT & TERMS OF REFERENCE

Following further discussions, it was therefore decided by Jane management that a softer approach would be preferable, by way of a cultural review to:

- Obtain further information about the 'hazing'/ initiation type behaviour (as far as possible)
- Determine its nature and extent
- Look into the involvement of old boys and old girls in that behaviour (and more broadly, including their positive input to the Jane experience)
- Find out more about the effect of the old boy/old girl culture on first-year students at Jane
- Obtain current residents' views on their general experience at Jane, and
- Understand residents' attitudes to alcohol consumption at Jane-run events and non-Jane events.

The rationale for this strategy was that a more educative and informed approach would likely have longer-lasting, constructive and positive effects on the Jane community.

By email on 15 March 2024, I was engaged by the Principal to undertake those enquiries, being well-placed to look at the issues in the context of the University's governance framework, as well as obligations imposed by TEQSA and the wider context of student safety and wellbeing.

We agreed that:

- The review should be as inclusive as possible and invite input from residents and former residents, management and Council
- The format should be informal café-style discussions with individuals or small groups, either in person, online or by phone, on-site or wherever the participants felt most comfortable and to encourage written submissions by email
- All participants would be de-identified in the report and their input would be treated confidentially
- For recommendations and outcomes to be credible and embraced by students, any suggestions for change should, as far as possible be student-led, both in their formulation and workability
- To minimise any suspicion that disciplinary action may be taken, it would be prudent to wait until I had finished in my role as Director SAFCU³.

1.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- A. Generally, a positive experience of life at JFH is reported by current and former residents who participated in the review.
- B. One event occurs annually which might be described as 'initiation', which takes place off-site, is segregated into male/female activities, involves drinking alcohol from an apparatus called 'the bull' and taking a low-level pledge of allegiance to the sisterhood/brotherhood of JFH. The drinking is not compulsory; first years can opt-out of attending if they choose.

³ 3 May 2024

- C. Other 'traditional' events are seen as uncomfortably alcohol-heavy and some students dislike the power imbalance between freshers and old boys/girls (eg: Chip Night).
- D. Current residents and old boys/girls welcome the ongoing involvement of alumni, especially in Jane sports (and also academic coaching).
- E. Some students would prefer to reduce the link between sports at Jane and alcohol consumption.
- F. Students would like the SCC to lead changes to Jane culture, on behalf of the student body.

1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 2.6 in the Detailed Report which follows sets out current best-practice strategic guidelines to improve culture in residential colleges and prevent 'hazing'.

It also includes the suggestions of the current Jane SCC.

The SCC has captured the spirit and intent of the guidelines; their suggestions are to be welcomed and are strongly recommended.

In the words of one participant in the review:

"A tradition is only a tradition because someone calls it that; it could just as easily be viewed as an out-of-date practice that no-one sees the value of anymore. We should just change the tradition into a more positive welcoming event and hold it on-site at Jane".

2 DETAILED REPORT

2.1 REVIEW PROCESS

Jane management informed the SCC and the reporting students that a review was going to take place. This information was well-received by residents.

I prepared draft wording for communications on 7 May 2024.

An email (Attachment A) was sent to all current residents by the DoS on 9 May 2024, attaching a detailed letter from the Principal, announcing the review and encouraging participation (Attachment B).

Students started to book appointments straight away.

Face-to-face meetings began on 13 May 2024, starting with some of the current SCC.

Over the next two weeks I received information from:

- 16 current students, in person
- 2 former SCC Presidents by phone/online
- 2 former residents (old girls), who provided submissions by email
- 2 Council members
- The former Principal

On 22 May 2024 Jane management arranged for posters with a QR code to the booking platform to be put up around Jane encouraging people to get involved.

The Student Club also put out communications that day via its Facebook page for current residents to the same effect.⁴

In consultation with Jane management, it was agreed that we might obtain further information by way of survey questions, one version for current residents, another for former residents (limited to the past 2-3 years) (Attachment C).

The surveys were completely confidential and ran from 23 to 31 May 2024.

A total of 17 current residents and 15 former residents responded.

Throughout the process I was provided with information from the DoS and Principal, as requested.

⁴ The DoS later discovered the Student Club were also running a concurrent survey of their own for current students on how they were enjoying college. They also put-up posters advertising their survey with a QR code. Senior Residents raised there may have been confusion for students. This is a valid point. Students receive a high volume of emails with requests to take surveys and suffer from 'survey-fatigue'.

I researched what has been done at other residential colleges and universities both in Australia and overseas to address hazing practices, in order to compare with issues at Jane and to assess the information received in this review.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO REVIEW

2.2.1 INITIAL INFORMATION

In March 2024 approached first year residents approached the Dean of Students (DoS), Sarah Hopkins, to report their experiences with past and present Jane students following the annual Tasmanian University Student Association (TUSA) event, Clubs and Societies Day.

This is a heavily advertised and well-attended event. It is student-driven and TUSA makes very clear that it is not a UTAS event. As can be seen from the below, it is billed as the 'biggest day of the year'. In the south, it takes place on the oval on the Sandy Bay campus.

It is a ticketed, over-18s only event at which alcohol is available. During the course of the afternoon, it can become boisterous and alcohol fuelled. There is always a Security presence. Students often go on to socialise at other venues off-site.



Discover your new favourite Clubs and Societies Rejoin some of your old favourites.

Clubs and Societies Day, Hobart On the Rugby Field, Sandy Bay Campus 1 pm - 6 pm Wednesday, February 28th 2024 (Welcome Week)

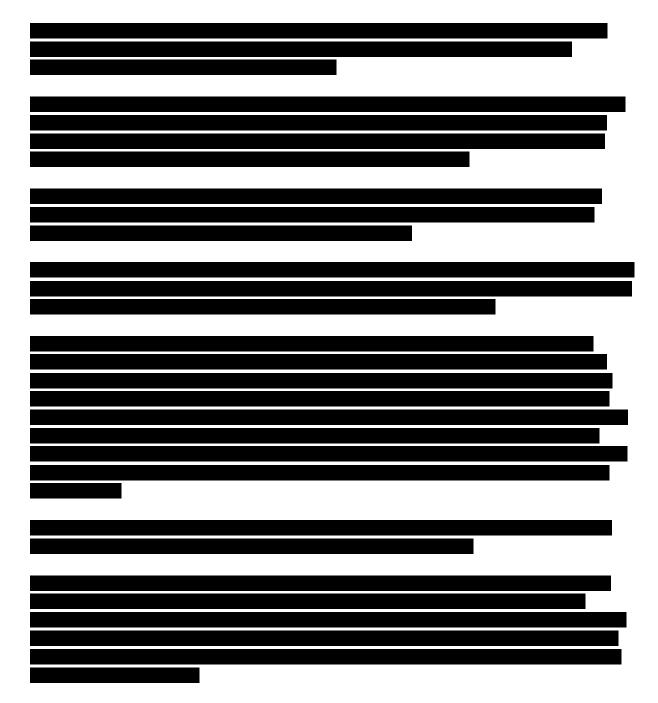
This is an 18+ event and photo ID will be required for entry

The Jane students reported that there was an 'induction event' for Jane first years ('freshers'). This took place after the TUSA event, whereby more senior Jane residents ('lifers'), including some current Jane student club committee (SCC)

members started rounding-up freshers via messages on group chats. The fresher girls and boys were to meet in different areas of the UTAS rugby oval.

Freshers had some forewarning about this occurring and were aware it involved former residents ('old boys/girls').

They were then taken off-site, blindfolded, to locations that they did not know. They were led by lifers, including members of the student club committee, both past and present. Their phones were taken from them. They were required to undergo a ritual involving drinking alcohol from an apparatus known as 'the bull'.



2.2.2 ENQUIRIES MADE BY JANE MANAGEMENT

The Principal and DoS spoke with members of the SCC.

It was acknowledged that some of the first years may not have seen the events of that day as light-hearted and 'silly' and that on reflection, it may not have been comfortable for some. They were insistent there was no forced drinking and anyone could opt out.

The SCC resolved to try to put an end to practice of off-site events after TUSA Clubs and Societies Day and wanted to work to make changes to old boy/old girl culture.

2.3 INFORMATION OBTAINED IN REVIEW

2.3.1 SUMMARY OF INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM CURRENT JANE RESIDENTS (INCLUDING FROM SURVEY)

Many students described the power imbalance between old boys and girls and freshers on Chip Night as unpleasant and unacceptable.

Similarly, the 'fresher exam', where first year students have food or shaving cream poured on them, which is passed off as a 'joke'. The freshers regard it as humiliating and stressful and it has an air of people being 'singled out' and 'picked on'. This was noticeably uncomfortable for international students.

First years also commented on the negativity of having to wear name tags in Welcome Week. They felt this was a cause for humiliation and embarrassment because if you forgot to wear yours, a lifer would write your name on your head with a marker pen. Consequently, some freshers lost trust in lifers.

Students felt generally supported by Senior Residents (SRs) and there was strong support for the work of the current SCC.

Students would like more interaction with management and for management to be more readily accessible.

The majority would like a Jane-run welcome or induction ceremony on site at the end of Welcome Week, devised by the SCC with input and approval of old boys and old girls and management, to increase inclusiveness and a sense of belonging.

There would be more support for this if students could be confident risks had been assessed and that the event would be less alcohol-focussed.

This event would preferably occur on the TUSA Clubs and Societies Day, in the late afternoon and be designed to bring students back to Jane premises rather than remain off-site. In this way, there would be more scope for managing risk and controlling inappropriate behaviours.

2.3.2 SUMMARY OF INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM FORMER JANE RESIDENTS (INCLUDING FROM SURVEY)

Most had enjoyed their time in residence in JFH and wanted to remain involved. It was not considered 'cool' to remain for their third year or beyond. The move to share-house accommodation is considered a rite of passage but after approximately two years the old boys/old girls' connection has weakened and the links with Jane less intense as friendship groups naturally dissipate.

The alcohol-culture has diminished over recent years, markedly so since COVID.

The SCC is seen as more egalitarian and works hard to be accessible and inclusive. SRs are much appreciated and relied upon.

2.3.3 SUMMARY OF INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS, FORMER PRINCIPAL AND JANE MANAGEMENT

Some of the cultural issues follow ready-formed cohorts of students who come from particular schools in the north and north-west.

Work already undertaken by management has noticeably changed culture for the better. $^{\rm 5}$

This was acknowledged by past Presidents of the SCC and one very long-term resident.

The number of fines imposed by SRs has reduced, which may be an indication behaviour is changing

The Culture Committee has been working to address recommendations of the Broderick Report and the remaining initiatives are in hand, working collaboratively with management and the SCC, with statements on progress having been made in 2022 and 2023.

Changes to culture should be student-led and where appropriate the SCC rewarded for positive work.

2.4 POLICIES/ PROCEDURES CONSIDERED

- UTAS Behaviour Policy
- UTAS Behaviour Procedure
- JFH College Obligations and Terms of Residence (COTR)
- JFH Student Code of Conduct
- JFH Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Alcohol at Jane Policy

The UTAS *Behaviour Policy* requires that all members of the University community are considerate of each other and behave appropriately, acting in accordance with the University's values of respect and self-respect, fairness and justice, integrity, trust and trustworthiness, responsibility and honesty.

⁵ <u>https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-07/jane-franklin-hall-ditches-fraternity-tables-uni-culture-</u> <u>change/100808374</u>

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The UTAS *Behaviour Procedure* states that the University will respond to instances of inappropriate behaviour, and members of the University community who engage in such behaviours may face consequences which could have a significant impact for them.

Examples of actions that may constitute inappropriate behaviour are set out in Appendix A of the *Behaviour Procedure*.

This covers bullying and behaviour which offends, humiliates, or intimidates.

'Bullying' is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards one or more persons, which creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying can occur unintentionally.

The accounts of some of the behaviour

could have given rise to action under the UTAS Behaviour Procedure and JFH Student Code of Conduct.

2.5 OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION FROM REVIEW

2.5.1 GENERAL

First and second year residents report a generally positive experience of JFH.

The fact alumni are actively encouraged to remain involved was a significant factor in making Jane their first choice of residence when applying to UTAS.

Of the first-year residents who provided information (including responding to the survey), the overwhelming majority welcome the collegiality and inclusivity of Jane, especially those for whom it is their first experience of living away from family.



Unfortunately, this review did not directly obtain the views of international students or the under-18s who reside at Jane as none came forward in person.

One or two can be picked-up from their answers to the surveys. They speak of feeling a degree of isolation. Information from students who participated in the in-person meetings say that there is some separation of international students from the main cohort, at least in the initial weeks of being at Jane, but the SCC, Senior Residents (SRs) and sports leaders do their best to encourage involvement and integration which is appreciated and generally successful. Events such as those showcasing international food and other multicultural activities are very popular. The issue of alcohol consumption provided a revealing insight into residents' maturity and confidence to manage their own preferences vis-à-vis societal behaviours and expectations.

Jane's alcohol policy makes clear it is not a 'dry' community and this is stated in the annual handbook⁷, along with the rationale for that stance and the expectations on residents not to abuse the privilege. Health, safety and responsible attitudes to drinking are emphasised, as is the need for mutual respect.

No-one said they would prefer a 'dry' community. All who participated agreed that drinking in a social context is part of student life and society in general.

A significant number of those who participated in the process said they do not drink at all or drink in moderation, and some choose not to go to the events where heavy drinking occurs. If they do attend, they opt out of consuming alcohol and have never been victimised or stigmatised for doing so. Their choice to abstain or partake in moderation has always been respected by their peers at Jane.

This feedback is endorsement that students feel safe at Jane and the culture around alcohol is generally positive, allowing residents to be themselves, express their choices clearly and without fear of being shunned and to live alongside their peers whose lifestyle choices may differ.

However, many also said they would prefer less alcohol-related activity, especially when alcohol is linked to sports. There was discomfort that the sporting successes of Jane sports teams tends to be marked by heavy alcohol consumption, and for those who do not wish to drink excessively, they can end up feeling excluded from the team spirit. They would prefer alcohol not to be taken as the reward for doing well.⁸

2.5.2 OLD BOYS/GIRLS

Overwhelmingly, both the current students and former students appreciate the involvement of the 'old boys and old girls', particularly those who return as sports coaches. It is seen a beneficial and rewarding way to remain actively involved in Jane society and all who spoke on this topic said they would like more opportunities for former residents to provide positive supports to current residents.

⁷ Link to current handbook <u>here</u>

⁸ Those participants who expressed this view also acknowledged, however, the view of alcohol as a reward/aspect of celebration in sporting and other adrenaline-fuelled situations (eg: exam success) is a deeply embedded societal trait which is not specific to Jane culture.

Jane sporting activities clearly provides a popular and successful bonding culture, subject to the above caveat about the link with alcohol.

All agreed that it would be artificial and unachievable to try to prohibit ongoing interactions or social connections between current and past students. They were reassured this was not the point or likely outcome of this review.

2.5.3 INITIATIONS, HAZING AND RITUALS VS. TRADITIONS

There is a great difference between an institutional tradition which binds members of a group and fosters collegial cohesion, as opposed to practices which have their roots in fear, intimidation, humiliation and are suggestive of power imbalance and/or control.

The first is to be welcomed and encouraged. The second is to be strongly discouraged and as far as possible, prevented and eliminated.

Of all the activities described by participants the only one which can be characterised as a form of initiation are the events after TUSA Clubs and Societies Day.

Not much evidence was forthcoming about what occurs at the boys' event. In summary it appears to involve being taken blind-folded to a share-house occupied by Jane old boys, required to drink alcohol from 'the bull', take a pledge or vow of secrecy and engage in physical wrestling.

Students describe seeing boys return from it scratched and bruised and in one case with a broken collarbone.

The girls' event is graphically described and was corroborated by a current 'lifer' who went through the same in her first year. A significant difference was that in 2023 girls were made to walk through the streets blindfolded; in 2024 some were taken in cars, possibly to increase their disorientation.

also describes reluctant acquiescence in drinking from 'the bull', rather than willingly and freely consenting to do so. This may be seen as analogous to the importance of consent being freely given in sexual behaviours. A great deal of work takes place nowadays to educate young people about the importance of consent in that context. The same should be true in the context of alcohol consumption. This is not a Jane-specific issue but presents an opportunity for Jane management and the current SCC to implement an educative approach to minimise risk in future.

Such after-effects are damaging and possibly result in chronic trauma. It is therefore also appropriate for an educative approach to incorporate reassurances that speaking

out and calling out harmful behaviour helps break cultish 'secrecy' and breaks the misplaced significance of the 'vow of silence'. As above, a parallel is drawn with respect to sexual behaviours where 'bystander' training is modern best practice.

There is much academic research into this issue and developing strategies for combatting harmful drinking behaviours⁹. It is beyond the scope of this review to explore that in detail.

2.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.6.1 SUGGESTED BEST-PRACTICE STRATEGIES

Although not all the below will be applicable (or achievable) for a residential college the size of JFH, they represent current best-practice models from universities on the mainland and overseas.

Preventing 'hazing' requires a multifaceted strategy that includes clear policies, education, support systems and strong enforcement measures.

- 1. Policy Development and Communication
 - Clear Anti-Hazing Policies: Develop and enforce comprehensive antihazing policies. Define what constitutes hazing, including physical, emotional and psychological abuse.
 - Regular Communication: Frequently communicate these policies to students and staff through emails, meetings and posters around premises.
 - Student Handbook: Include the anti-hazing policies prominently in the student handbook and require all students to read and sign an acknowledgment form.
- 2. Education and Training
 - Mandatory Workshops: Organize mandatory hazing-prevention workshops for all students, particularly incoming freshers and student leaders, at the beginning of each academic year.
 - Ongoing Education: Offer regular seminars, webinars, and discussion groups to keep the conversation about hazing prevention ongoing.
 - Staff Training: Provide training for faculty and staff to recognize signs of hazing and understand their role in prevention and intervention.
- 3. Support Systems and Reporting Mechanisms

⁹ <u>https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14550725221143169</u>

- Anonymous Reporting: Establish an anonymous reporting system (eg: hotline, online form) for students to report hazing incidents without fear of retaliation.
- Support Services: Ensure access to counselling and support services for students who experience or witness hazing.
- Peer Support Groups: Create peer support groups to provide a safe space for students to discuss their experiences and support each other.
- 4. Community Building and Alternatives to Hazing
 - Positive Traditions: Promote positive, non-hazing traditions that build community and foster a sense of belonging among students.
 - Team-Building Activities: Organize team-building activities, workshops, and social events that encourage inclusivity and respect.
 - Leadership Programs: Develop leadership programs that emphasize ethical behaviour, responsibility and respect for others.
- 5. Enforcement and Accountability
 - Strict Enforcement: Implement a zero-tolerance policy for hazing with clear consequences for violations, including suspension, expulsion, and legal action if necessary.
 - Incident Investigation: Establish a dedicated team to promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of hazing.
 - Transparency: Regularly report on the outcomes of hazing investigations to the community to maintain transparency and demonstrate the institution's commitment to addressing the issue.
- 6. Collaboration and Evaluation
 - Collaboration with National Organisations: Work with national anti-hazing organisations to stay updated on best practices and resources.
 - Regular Assessments: Conduct regular assessments and surveys to gauge the effectiveness of hazing prevention efforts and make necessary adjustments.
 - Student Involvement: Involve students in the development and implementation of hazing prevention strategies to ensure they are relevant and effective.

The last point emphasised as it is arguably the most relevant for this review.

2.6.2 JANE CURRENT SCC SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

The views of the Jane SCC were specifically sought; below is what they propose.

As can be seen, they have captured the best-practice principles and come up with practical suggestions which can be implemented with little or no cost.

Notes on our work towards a positive Jane culture

(specifically surrounding old boys and old girls)

- Organizing Inclusive and Safe Social Events: We've been focusing on creating positive, inclusive events where current Jane Franklin Hall members can hang out with old boys and girls in a safe and welcoming environment. A great example is our lawn bowls event, which was a fun, non-drinking setting for everyone to mingle and get to know each other.
- 2. Implementing a Comprehensive Vetting Process for Old Boy/Girl Coaches: To keep jane sport as a safe and supportive space, we've started a more thorough vetting process for old boys and girls who want to be coaches. This includes making sure they sign the code of conduct, making sure they commit to trainings and agree (sign??) to not abuse power etc.
- 3. Encouraging Old Boy/Girl Engagement through Inclusive Events: We've begun to make it a point to invite old boys and girls back for various events, so they continue to feel valued and included in the Jane community, so no contempt is built or feeling of being left out (they won't "come back with a vengeance".) These gatherings help strengthen the bonds between past and present members, fostering a sense of ongoing belonging.
- 4. Exploring the Introduction of a Legacy Day: We're looking into the idea of having a Legacy Day instead of Chip Night as the official introduction for freshers to old boys and girls. This would offer a more meaningful way to connect new members with our old boys and girls, emphasizing the importance of continuity within the college community without creating a power structure where freshers are at the bottom of the ladder.
- 5. Encouraging a three-year culture at Jane, so people feel as if they're finished with their Jane experience properly.
- 6. Establish an anonymous feedback form that runs from now that the student club can constantly refer to, to make sure raiders can report any concerns or instances of power abuse without fear of retaliation. Or any general feedback for SCC.

END OF REPORT

3 ATTACHMENTS

A	Email to current students from Dean of Students
в	Letter from Principal to current students
с	Questions for surveys

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