

National Student Ombudsman launches to improve the lives of all higher education students.

The National Student Ombudsman (NSO) has officially launched, providing a free, independent and impartial complaints service for higher education students to address unresolved issues with their higher education providers.

More than 1.6 million higher education students across the country are now able to access the complaints function to escalate disputes which were not satisfactorily resolved by their provider.

As a statutory authority, the National Student Ombudsman has royal commission-style investigative powers across a broad remit of issues including student safety and welfare, racism, course administration and the effectiveness of student complaints processes.

National Student Ombudsman, Iain Anderson said, "This is a significant day for all Australian higher education students. The National Student Ombudsman was created to ensure student complaints are heard. We are independent from education providers and Ministers and we consider complaints impartially."

First Assistant Ombudsman at the National Student Ombudsman, Sarah Bendall said, "All tertiary students in Australia deserve a high quality and safe learning experience. The NSO's most important job is to listen to and act on student complaints. We will use the power of individual complaints to drive systemic improvements and greater institutional accountability across the higher education sector".

The NSO was recommended by all state and territory education ministers and received bipartisan support in federal parliament. It is also the first action under the National Action Plan to Address Gender Based Violence.

Founder of The STOP Campaign, Camille Schloeffel said, “Sexual violence should never be a part of the university experience, and students deserve better. The NSO will contribute significantly to the prevention of sexual violence through a trauma-informed complaints mechanism that prioritises student welfare over institutional reputation and profit. This is a momentous day for all victims and survivors who have been fighting for decades to see action taken to stop sexual violence on campus.”

Dr Allison Henry, whose doctoral research at UNSW into campus sexual violence contributed to the establishment of the NSO, said, “With the creation of a streamlined escalated complaints process, the NSO promises to be transformative for Australian higher education students. The NSO will save students from having to navigate the current confusing patchwork of complaints mechanisms and make higher education institutions more accountable.”

The NSO adopts a student-centred approach to complaint handling, prioritising student safety, privacy, and wellbeing and offers multiple channels for lodging a complaint, including anonymous reporting options.

We are committed to ensuring fairness and equity in the higher education sector.

Students can visit www.nso.gov.au to learn more or lodge a complaint.

ENDS

Media inquiries:

Media@ombudsman.gov.au

Brigid Glanville: 0407 210 976

Molly Osborne: 0487 744 475