

[REDACTED]

20 January 2025

Mr Richard Connock

Level 6, NAB House
86 Collins Street
Hobart Tasmania 7001

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Dear Mr Connock

**Managing National Student Ombudsman (NSO) – Tasmanian Ombudsman
(TAS Ombudsman) Relations**

This letter is to establish arrangements to manage relations between our organisations within the higher education sector.

Legislative changes with the passing of the *Universities Accord (National Student Ombudsman) Act 2024* established the NSO as the primary escalated complaints handling mechanism for students within the higher education sector.

I understand that the TAS Ombudsman has existing responsibilities within this sector, including receiving complaints from students concerning their higher education provider.

I would like to establish arrangements which will focus on coordination, cooperation and information sharing between our two organisations for the effective oversight of the higher education sector.

I propose that the NSO and the TAS Ombudsman agree to:

- facilitate trauma informed referrals between our organisations where appropriate
- ensure all complaint referrals between our organisations are done with the express informed consent of the complainant

- share information, policy and guidance documents, including complaint assessment matrices, to ensure our organisations have the information required to accurately communicate complaints pathways to students
- share de-identified complaint data to enable the NSO to report on the volume of student complaints across Australia, and to consider national complaint trends among the higher education sector
- establish regular formal engagement and maintain contact lists of relevant officers to resolve any jurisdictional or administrative matters between our organisations
- partner together on stakeholder engagement initiatives within the TAS Ombudsman's jurisdiction to promote best practice complaints handling and to improve the student experience within the higher education sector
- manage potential Public Interest Disclosures under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002* (Tas) by having the NSO refer them, with the consent of the complainant, to the TAS Ombudsman
- manage complaints concerning TEQSA-registered dual providers¹ so complaints about the provider and that provider's higher education awards are handled by the NSO and complaints concerning VET courses are handled by the TAS Ombudsman
- manage complaints concerning controlled entities of higher education providers on a case-by-case basis, noting that our understanding of these entities shall develop over time.

I propose that if the above is acceptable to the TAS Ombudsman, that this letter and your letter of confirmation in reply shall together constitute an Exchange of Letters between our two agencies and that a copy of this Exchange of Letters be published to our respective websites.

¹ A dual provider is an entity that can confer both higher education awards and Vocational Educational Training awards.

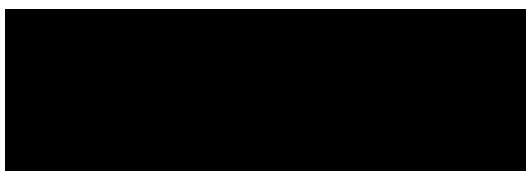
I further propose that this Exchange of Letters does not create any enforceable legal rights or obligations between our organisations.

Nonetheless, we agree to act reasonably and cooperate in good faith in accordance with the terms of this Exchange of Letters.

Additionally, if a dispute cannot be resolved at the contact officer level, the dispute will be escalated to the Deputies of each organisation, or to officers nominated by the contact officer for each organisation, for resolution.

This Exchange of Letters shall commence on the date the TAS Ombudsman provides the letter of confirmation and will continue until either organisation provides notice to vary or terminate the arrangement.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Sarah Bendall.

Sarah Bendall
First Assistant Ombudsman
National Student Ombudsman