

[REDACTED]

29 January 2025

Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services

Mr Anthony Reilly

Level 18, 53 Albert Street

Brisbane QLD 4000

[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Reilly

**Managing the National Student Ombudsman (NSO) – Queensland Ombudsman
(QLD 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 QLD 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 QLD 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 complaint pathways to students
- share de-identified complaint data, in accordance with relevant laws, to enable the NSO to report on the volume of student complaints across Australia, and to consider national complaint trends 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 QLD Ombudsman's jurisdiction to promote best practice complaints handling within the higher education sector
- consult with each other where necessary and, with the consent of the complainant, appropriately refer complaints that may amount to a Public Interest Disclosure under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* (Qld)
- Manage complaints in relation to TEQSA-registered dual providers¹, so that the QLD Ombudsman handles complaints about a VET course or VET student, and with consent refers higher education student complaints within the NSO jurisdiction to the NSO.
- 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
- the NSO managing student complaints concerning possible contraventions of the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) including by having the NSO consult the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

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

If the above is acceptable to the QLD Ombudsman, this letter and your letter of reply shall together constitute an Exchange of Letters between our two agencies and that a copy of this Exchange of Letters be published to the NSO's website.

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 QLD Ombudsman provides the letter of confirmation and will continue until either organisation provides notice to vary or terminate the arrangement.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Bendall
First Assistant Ombudsman
National Student Ombudsman