INDEPENDENT PANEL TO RESOLVE SCHOOL DISPUTES

Parents and students will now have a new independent umpire to help resolve disputes with their school.

A new Independent Panel for School Dispute Resolution will be established to help deal with complex complaints in Victorian government schools.

This new approach will help keep students engaged in learning and prevent long-running disputes, which can become distressing for families and school staff.

The Independent Panel will look at the most complex complaints that have not been able to be resolved locally.

That includes responses to bullying, access and inclusion issues, wellbeing and engagement issues, management of medical issues, and appropriate settings for students at risk or disengaged students.

The Panel will take a flexible and informal dispute resolution approach to resolving complaints, with the aim of finding an outcome agreeable to all sides.

Where this is not possible, the Panel will make recommendations to the Department of Education and Training for a decision on appropriate action.

An independent Chair will oversee the Panel, with members chosen from a group of experts on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the complaint.

This group will have expertise in education and fields relevant to the complaint, such as disabilities, Koorie education, child development, family violence and mental health.

The Minister for Education will appoint the Chair and panel members, with expressions of interest now open.

For more information about the Independent Panel for School Dispute Resolution visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/independentunit.aspx

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“Setting up an independent umpire for complex complaints will help issues be resolved more quickly, which is better for the student, parents and the school.”

“We’re also providing extra support for schools with additional Community Liaison Officers rolled out earlier this year, and access to mediation and professional development – this means more complaints can be resolved locally in the first instance.”

Quotes attributable to Parents Victoria Executive Officer Gail McHardy

“Parents Victoria is pleased that, after 11 years of working towards an independent complaints mechanism, Victorian government school parents now have such a service available to them.”