



# National Student Ombudsman – funding and cost recovery

The Australian Government will provide \$44.3 million over four years from 2026-27 to continue to fund the work of the independent National Student Ombudsman (NSO).

Subject to the passage of legislation, a levy on higher education providers will be introduced from 1 January 2027 to fully recover the ongoing costs of the NSO's work.

## How will it work?

The Australian Government will introduce legislation later in 2026 to give effect to the levy.

The proposed approach is to distribute the levy based on higher education providers' student population.

The levy will fully recover the costs of the NSO's functions from 1 January 2027 and is the most appropriate and sustainable way to fund the NSO's operations, ensuring its independence while aligning costs with those who create demand for the service.

A levy distributed across providers avoids placing costs on students who should be able to access the NSO's services for free.

## Why is it important?

The National Student Ombudsman commenced in February 2025 in response to the Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education agreed by all Australian education Ministers.

It responds to longstanding and protracted failures by higher education providers to appropriately handle student complaints. It provides a free service to students studying at Australian higher education institutions.

In its first year, the NSO received over 4,600 student contacts, resulting in over 3,800 complaints, with 62% of complaints already resolved.

As the NSO works to investigate student concerns about the actions of higher education providers and mediate outcomes, it is appropriate that the sector supports the ongoing cost of the NSO.

## Who will benefit?

The NSO is critical to driving a stronger focus on positive student experiences, educational outcomes and cultural improvements in the higher education sector.

It provides students with a free, effective, trauma-informed escalated complaints mechanism for concerns related to their higher education provider.

Where students are not satisfied by their provider's response to a complaint, the NSO can investigate and consider whether the decisions and actions of a higher education provider were unreasonable, unjust, or otherwise wrong.

The NSO can also recommend that a provider takes specific steps to resolve a complaint. Under the *National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* a provider must implement any recommendations made by the NSO in relation to gender-based violence which are directed to it.

This can include student complaints about gender-based violence, antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism or discrimination on campus.

The work of the NSO also supports best practice amongst higher education providers. One of the NSO's statutory functions is to educate the sector on best practice for the handling of complaints.