

Advancing the Agenda of the Parent-School Partnership

INDEPENDENT PANEL FOR SCHOOL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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"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," said Gail McHardy, Parents Victoria Executive Officer.

Judith Graley, Parliamentary Secretary for Education and MLA of Narre Warren South for the Andrews Government announced yesterday that a new **Independent Panel for School Dispute Resolution** will be established to help deal with complex complaints in Victorian government schools.

The Independent Panel will look at the most complex complaints that have not been able to be resolved locally. The Panel will be selected for each hearing depending on the special needs of the individual case. Experts in the fields of disability, Koorie education, child development, family violence and mental health will be called upon as required. These experts will be appointed by the Minister for Education and Parents Victoria urges the Victorian community to express highly regarded professionals for these roles to the Minister.

In 2005 Parents Victoria presented its Complaints Resolution Project findings to the then State Government for consideration. Eleven of the twelve recommendations were adopted immediately. The twelfth recommendation was for an independent umpire. After continuous lobbying over the intervening time, with a further two governments, we have finally succeeded in having an independent panel and chair established to ensure there is an avenue where parents can feel confident of an independent hearing for conflict resolution for the most severe issues which take their toll on students, parents and school leaders.

"It's vital that this new panel is independent, so that everyone accessing its services can be assured of a fair hearing, both in reality and perception. This is why Parents Victoria strongly supports the appointment of the Independent Panel Chair by the Victorian Minister for Education," said Gail.

Parents Victoria will continue to work with parents, schools and Department Regional/Central staff to triage complaints under the new **Responsive School Complaints Framework**.

Parents Victoria looks forward to its continuing working relationship with the Department of Education in the field of independent dispute resolution.

For more information, please contact Executive Officer Gail McHardy on 0413 589 627.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/independentunit.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>