**Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution**

**Working with parents, students and schools to resolve issues through an independent simple and fair process.**

**What is the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution?**

FRANK HANDY: So the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution is the third level of complaint management in the Victorian School system and what it is a Chair and Deputy Chairs who have ADR expertise and number of subject matter experts who are resources to bring into solving problems that haven’t been able to be resolved at either the school or the regional level and are still outstanding.

So the first thing I think you can really expect is to be heard and to make sure we understand exactly what the problem is and to look for a resolution together. We won’t have a formal hearing process of any kind there won’t be kind of evidence there won’t be sitting in front of a panel trying to prove a case that’s not the point the point is that there’s a dispute somewhere and there’s a student who’s being effected and our goal is to get a student a really good experience by solving that problem and solving it quickly.

**When would parents be referred to the office?**

**FRANK HANDY**: So the complaint process typically goes through the school first that’s the idea is that the schools are supposed to resolve everything they can and have an opportunity to resolve everything they can. The second level is the region so if it’s not able to be resolved the principal or the parent can refer to the region which is responsible for an area of the state and manages all the school disputes that move upwards from there. If the region isn’t able to resolve the dispute, then the region would refer to the Department and the Department would refer to the office if it’s appropriate to do so.

**What is alternative dispute resolution, or A.D.R?**

**FRANK HANDY**: The term alternative dispute resolution refers generally to things that are not courts and not tribunals so and that really is our approach to things is to deal with them in an informal manner to deal with disputes in an alternative way to things like evidence or hearings or tribunals or rights and to deal with them more as problems that need to be solved. So one of the really interesting things we’ve done with the Office is to create a pool of resources and that is a people with real subject matter expertise so if the problem is about say disability access or resources or aboriginal issues or if someone has a particular rights complaint something about bullying things like that we’re going to be able to draw on a number of people who have expertise and experience in those areas. So we’ve got the capacity to design around what the problem is so if we need the subject matter experts we’ll use the subject matter experts, if we just need to have a better conversation between the school and the parent or if we need to understand more about what the particular problem is that hasn’t been really grasped by the system then that’s what we will be doing.

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**INDEPENDENT OFFICE FOR SCHOOL DISPUTE RESOLUTION**