



Australian
National
University

Submission to the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces

Australian National Internships Program

1. Brief history

- 1.1 The Australian National Internships Program (ANIP) enables university students from across Australia to experience policymaking through research-based internships in the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia. The 1993 Agreement between the Presiding Officers of Parliament and the Australian National University (ANU) established the ANIP program as the only university program that offered Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships.
- 1.2 Commonwealth Parliamentary interns undertake research projects in the offices of Members of the House of Representatives, Senators and the Parliamentary Departments. During their work placement for academic credit their research is supported by academic workshops, supervision and assessment from the ANU. The program is open to postgraduate and upper-level undergraduate students from any university who are Australian citizens.

2. Legal position of students

- 2.1 ANIP is a university course, and students receive academic credit towards their university degree upon completion of the course. Therefore, the University has a clear interest in, and seeks to support its students throughout their internship placement in Parliament and the course.
- 2.2 In line with the Fair Work Act, students are unpaid and do not have an employment relationship with the MP or Senator who is hosting the internship. Like volunteers and other visitors to parliamentary workplaces, student interns are not employees and are not directly subject to the MoP(S) Act. They would need to be specifically included to be covered by the complaints and support mechanisms proposed by the *Foster Review of the Parliamentary Workplace: Responding to Serious Incidents* (2021).
- 2.3 Students sign a Deed Poll with the ANU covering their own professional conduct and workplace confidentiality as well as an internship schedule that is agreed with the ANIP Office. Insurance coverage for students undertaking internships and travel grants for inter-state students are provided by the ANU.

3. Governance

- 3.1 The Australian National Internships Program is based within the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences and reports directly to the Dean of the College.
- 3.2 The Commonwealth Parliamentary Internships Program Steering Committee advises the ANIP Director on strategic and operational matters pertaining to the internship program, and plays a key role in ensuring the program remains relevant to the needs of the Commonwealth Parliament. The Steering Committee is comprised of the ANIP Director, a Member of the House of Representatives, a Senator, and representatives from the Parliamentary Library, the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate.
- 3.3 The ANIP Advisory Board provides strategic direction in delivering ANIP's vision of being one of the world's leading policy internship programs. The ANIP Advisory Board is comprised of representatives of the Parliamentary Departments, leading host organisations and distinguished ANIP alumni.

4. Selection process for interns

- 4.1 Interns are selected based on outstanding academic performance, research skills and public engagement, making ANIP one of the most highly regarded internship opportunities in Australia. ANIP internships are advertised nationally, and the ANIP Office manages the application and shortlisting process. Closing

dates for student applications are 30 April and 30 September each year. Students are shortlisted for the ANIP program based on academic merit, their resume, written application on career and research interests and an academic reference.

- 4.2 A shortlist of students is provided to potential hosts, and hosts may choose to interview candidates before making their selection. Shortlisting for MPs and Senators is based on political preferences identified by students, their geographic origin, host research topics or mentoring interests. Some female parliamentarians have expressed interest in sponsoring young women as interns to increase their participation in politics, and this has been reflected in our shortlisting for them. Parliamentarians always have the final decision over whether a student is offered a parliamentary internship with their office.

5. Existing policies and processes in relation to parliamentary intern safety and wellbeing

- 5.1 The Australian National University is responsible for providing a safe, inclusive and respectful campus where its members can study, work and live free from sexual assault, sexual harassment and all other forms of sexual misconduct. The ANU Sexual Misconduct Policy 2020 (Attachment A) and the Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Procedure 2019 (Attachment B) also apply to educational activities outside of the ANU, and to its students, including when undertaking Commonwealth Parliamentary internships through ANIP in the Commonwealth Parliament.
- 5.2 The ANU Discipline Rule proscribes behaviour that amounts to misconduct by students including harassment, victimisation or other discrimination. The University Code of Conduct prescribes duties and obligations of staff including ensuring fair treatment of people and avoiding harassing, bullying or discriminatory behaviour.
- 5.3 The University has an obligation under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to ensure a safe working environment and prevent bullying or harassing behaviour by staff that may amount to a risk to health and safety. This obligation is reiterated in the University Enterprise Agreement.

6. Education and training in relation to parliamentary intern safety and wellbeing

- 6.1 The Consent Matters online module is compulsory for all ANU students. The online module explores the nature of sexual consent, how to recognise it and how to identify situations where it can't be given.
- 6.2 The ANU Respectful Relationships Unit delivers a session in the ANIP course workshops on sexual harassment in the workplace which includes disclosure/reporting processes and the support services available to students.
- 6.3 Parliamentary interns also receive an overview of APH security and safety processes and contacts from the Parliamentary Departments as part of their orientation.
- 6.4 The ANIP Office is comprised of the Director, Senior Administrator, Administrative Assistant and Course Tutors, who have completed training from the ANU Respectful Relationships Unit on responding to disclosures.

7. Existing reporting mechanisms

7.1 As students, parliamentary interns have multiple pathways for disclosing, reporting and seeking support in cases of bullying or harassment. The ANIP Office can assist them in accessing appropriate pathways and students can potentially move between these pathways, although this may be limited by legal action or confidentiality agreements. Disclosure and reporting pathways include through:

ANU	ANIP Office
	ANU Student Incidents and Support team (in cases of sexual assault)
	ANU Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Form
Internship workplace	Host or Supervisor
	1800 APH SPT
Public	Police
	Australian Human Rights Commission
	1800 RESPECT
	Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

7.2 In responding to a student disclosure of serious sexual harassment or abuse, the ANIP Office would refer a student to:

- ANU Student Incidents and Support team for response and case coordination
- ANU Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Form which allows for anonymous disclosure.
- Appropriate reporting options for Parliament
- Police, where appropriate;
- Australian Human Rights Commission, where appropriate

7.3 In responding to a student disclosure of bullying or inappropriate workplace conduct, the ANIP Office would:

- Offer for the student to suspend or transfer the work placement with no academic penalty;
- Offer to support the student to report the issue with the Parliamentary Office concerned or through Parliament's procedures;
- Seek specialist advice from the ANU Respectful Relationships Unit
- Engage directly with the Parliamentarian who is hosting the intern (in cases involving MoPs Act staff of their office);
- Engage directly with the Presiding Officers (in cases involving Parliamentarians or Parliamentary Department employees).

7.4 Throughout the course, the following mechanisms are available where students can identify any emerging or present issues to do with their placements:

- Weekly timesheets that include workplace related questions;
- Confidential course debrief;
- Anonymous ANU Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Form
- Academic workshops, advisory sessions and office hours.

7.5 However, because the Commonwealth Parliamentary Internship is undertaken as an academic course, this may deter students from reporting incidents to the ANIP Office due to concerns that this would impact on the marking of their academic performance. Students are therefore also advised of the independent

support and advice available through the ANU student services, on how to access anonymous disclosure mechanisms at the ANU and public support services.

8. Structures of support

- 8.1 For current and past students, the ANU offers a response and referral system that is currently delivered by Relationships Australia Canberra to provide advice and support on matters of sexual harassment and sexual violence. They can connect students to the services suited to their needs.
- 8.2 Support for former students is also available through the ANU Dean of Students. Current students can seek support via the ANU Counselling Centre and other University Support Services as well as the Dean of Students. ANU will help with accessing relevant counselling, medical or legal services including referral to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC), which is a specialist service in Canberra that provides crisis and ongoing counselling and support as well as information about medical and legal options.
- 8.3 Current or past students can contact the ANIP Offices for advice on ANU support services and available disclosure processes. The ANIP Office would provide support if a student requested assistance in:
 - Raising a complaint with host / supervisor;
 - Attending mediation or investigatory meetings where appropriate;
 - Engaging with host organisation support services;
 - Accessing a host organisation's process for disclosure and reporting.

9. Workplace culture

- 9.1 The ANU Strategic Plan 2021-2025 articulates a strong commitment to inclusive, respectful and equitable values and their enactment in every aspect of student experience. This extends to the student experience of Commonwealth Parliamentary internships, and therefore the ANIP program has a duty of care to not place students in unsafe workplaces.
- 9.2 If concerns about workplace culture in a specific parliamentary office were raised with the ANIP Office by student interns or by members of the Parliamentary Steering Committee, these would be grounds to refuse shortlisting for future internships with that office.
- 9.3 In supporting a safe and respectful placement experience for our students, the ANIP Office follows an operational process of pre-empt, detect and remedy that extends across all workplace issues, student mental health and student academic performance. The ANIP academic workshops include multiple scenarios to set student expectations around acceptable workplace behaviours. During the course at ANU, students are provided with multiple pathways and contacts by which to raise issues and seek advice. Issues may be raised by students or identified by staff through weekly timesheets used to debrief on activities. Individual students are then supported to engage with the ANU, the host organisation or public support services as appropriate.

10. Considerations and future actions

- 10.1 The ANU has a duty of care to students as the internship placement is undertaken as part of their university coursework. The Commonwealth Parliament or individual Parliamentarians may have legal obligations to parliamentary internship students as workplace participants as defined under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984.
- 10.2 The ANIP Office has had very low numbers of students reporting issues of harassment or bullying in their internship placements. However, this does not preclude that students may have experienced sexual harassment and felt unable or uncomfortable to report these incidents. Events that have been raised by students directly with the ANIP Office have more often been about incidents of bullying or gender harassment.
- 10.3 Given the media focus on safety in Parliament in early 2021 the ANU contacted the former ANIP students in its alumni database, and current students with advice regarding university-based and public support services.
- 10.4 As students, ANIP interns have access to a range of pathways for support and reporting through the ANU, their work placement, public support providers, the police, Fair Work Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- 10.5 Despite that, a potential area for concern would be whether the use of confidentiality agreements as identified in the *Review of the Parliamentary Workplace: Responding to Serious Incidents* (2021) would limit the ability of students to engage with ANU support and counselling services.
- 10.6 Further, creating a positive workplace culture means that all participants in the parliamentary internship experience must have shared information and expectations and be able to have open and transparent conversations about workplace behaviours. While Department of Finance collects data on complaints by MoP(S) Act employees, this is not shared with ANU and is therefore not able to be considered when the ANIP Office receives expressions of interest to participate in the program from Parliamentarian's offices. There is the potential issue that the reporting of multiple incidents or incidents affecting different categories of workplace participants (eg visitors, volunteers or others) in an office would not be visible to the ANU in arranging student placements.
- 10.7 Some two-thirds of ANIP students are female and the program is proud that from its foundation we have strong ongoing support from female Parliamentarians who have engaged with the ANIP internship program to sponsor the development of young women into future leadership positions. It is important that the ANU exemplifies and enhances the workforce leadership capabilities of all ANIP participants.

Table 1: Commonwealth Parliamentary Internship placements during 46th Parliament of Australia

(July 2019-June 2021)

	House of Representatives	Senate
Number of student interns	61	38
Female student interns as proportion of total (%)	61%	71%
Total students hosted by female Parliamentarians (%)	43%	55%

