

Performance report for the period 14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Fast Facts

Complaints

525

received

472

completed

52%

completed
within 30 days

79.5%

complainant
outcome achieved

\$323,202

of fees refunded/reimbursed/waived

Formal Enquiries

107

received

102

completed

Other

14,720+

Web hits

1,100+

stakeholders
attended
presentations

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1 Introduction

The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman (OQTO) commenced operation on 14 September 2015 and was established by the Queensland Government as part of its plan for reinvigorating the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Queensland.

The OQTO provides a free, confidential, and independent service to review and resolve enquiries and complaints from apprentices, trainees, students, employers and other parties about the VET system.

The OQTO helps clients navigate the VET sector and finds the best way to address their concerns. The office provides free advice about rights and responsibilities within the VET sector and aims to address complaints impartially and quickly.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman will look at the client's circumstances and assist them to resolve issues appropriately by:

- reviewing the issue and recommending the most appropriate action to take;
- referring the complaint to another agency if they are best suited to assist;
- mediating between parties to come to a mutually beneficial solution; and
- advocating solutions for key issues in the VET sector.

The OQTO started receiving complaints and enquiries from the first week of operation and all are integrated in the data in this report. This document contains performance data for the period of 14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017.

Over time, the data will identify trends which will inform the Queensland Training Ombudsman's work in promoting improved service delivery by the training sector, and in identifying systemic issues.

Data in this report is correct as at 31 March 2017.

1.1 The First 18 Months

Mr Geoff Favell commenced as Interim Training Ombudsman on 14 September 2015. Legislation to formally establish the position under the *Further Education and Training Act 2014* was proclaimed on 22 April 2016 and Mr Favell was appointed the Queensland Training Ombudsman on 29 September 2016.

Apart from dealing with incoming complaints, the first 18 months of the OQTO have been spent on a number of key administrative activities including:

- setting up temporary premises independent of Department of Education and Training (DET) at 61 Mary Street and moving to permanent accommodation at Level 17, 53 Albert Street;
- the development of criteria and protocols around complaint assessment, the establishment of a complaints register and the creation of various correspondence templates to support the complaint management process;

- creation of a simple web page containing a PDF complaint form and FAQs;
- establishment of a complaints telephone hotline;
- releasing a series of announcements promoting the role of the OQTO as proposed in the approved communications plan;
- developing, printing and distributing a brochure to local Members of Parliament and Regional Training offices;
- developing and implementing a new database which streamlines complaint management; and
- working with the creative team at *New Word Order* on the development of branding and a new website.

Since September 2015, the Queensland Training Ombudsman has held numerous meetings with various stakeholders including the South Australian Training Advocate, the Queensland Health Ombudsman, senior representatives of the Australian Department of Education and Training, representatives from Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), the Queensland Ombudsman, the Overseas Students Ombudsman, Group Training Queensland and Northern Territory Inc (GTAQNT), the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC), Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ) and TAFE Queensland.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman has delivered presentations on the role and functions of the Queensland Training Ombudsman at Townsville, Maroochydore, Toowoomba, Chermiside, Eight Mile Plains, Ipswich, Emerald, Logan, Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Cairns and North Lakes with over 1,100 people in attendance at the information sessions.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman also presented at the Construction Skills Queensland Board, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union Apprentice Conference, VET Industry Advisory Organisation, Resources Industry Skills Association Advisory Group, Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services Inc, VET Industry Group, ACPET Queensland Learning Summit and TAFE Queensland SkillsTech Teacher Orientation Program.

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with GTAQNT, ACPET, CSQ, ASQA, TAFE Queensland, DET and an Information Sharing Agreement has been entered into with OFT.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman website has received over 14,720 hits between 14 September 2015 and 31 March 2017. New branding has been completed and the development of a full Queensland Training Ombudsman website is due to go live in early April 2017.

On 29 August 2016, the Minister directed the Queensland Training Ombudsman to undertake a review of training in the security industry, with a particular focus on identifying any systemic issues or areas for improvement. The final report was submitted to the Minister on 29 November 2016.

1.2 Complaints Summary

In the period 14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017, the Queensland Training Ombudsman received and assessed 632 complaints and enquiries. As expected, the majority of complainants, over 74%, are from apprentices, trainees

and students. Just over half of the complainants are female and over 45% of complainants reside in the Metropolitan or North Coast Region of Queensland.

Just over a quarter of complaints relate to the community services sector, followed by business with just over 13%. RTO behaviour appears to be a predominant area of concern along with enrolment and refund issues.

Of particular note, the Queensland Training Ombudsman has:

- achieved the complainants preferred outcome in over 79% of completed investigations;
- effected resolution of 68 cases regarding course fees to both parties' satisfaction and involving a refund or waiver of approximately \$323,202;
- formally referred 27 matters to the Department of Education and Training (DET), two to ASQA and one to the Office of Industrial Relations for further investigation.
- provided information to DET on behalf of complainants which was considered by DET and resulted in the termination of Pre-qualified Supplier agreements and changes to subsidy arrangements.

The OQTO commenced investigations with respect to an electrical licensing safety issue, which resulted in recommendations that enhanced overall training quality for apprentice electricians. Consultations took place with the Electrical Safety Office and DET. Recommendations were submitted and approved by the Minister on 1 June 2016 and DET formed a reference group to oversee the implementation of the report recommendations.

2 Summary of Complaints/Enquiries

2.1 Number of Complaints/Enquiries Received

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Type	Number	Percentage
Complaint	525	83.1
Enquiry	107	16.9
Total	632	100.0

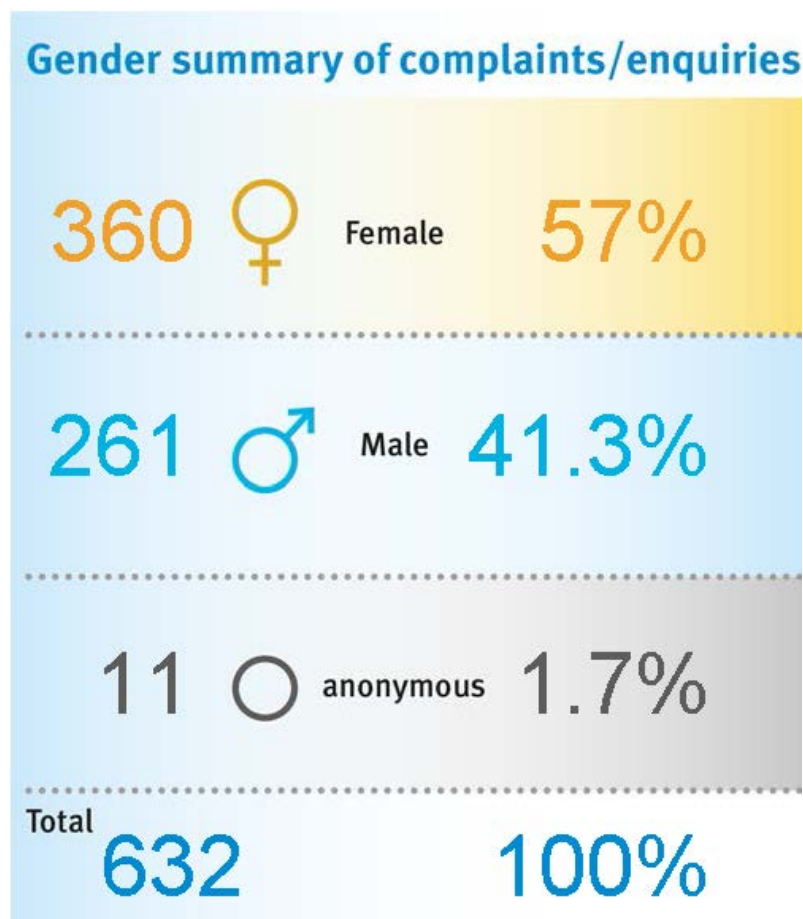
2.2 Timing of Complaints/Enquiries

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Month received	Number
September (commenced 14/9/15)	4
October	9
November	20
December	18
January	14
February	33
March	31
April	39
May	49
June	38
Total for 2015/16	255
July	38
August	33
September	43
October	53
November	35
December	35
January	38
February	52
March	50
Total for 2016/17	377
Total since commencement	632

2.3 Complaints/Enquiries by Gender

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017



3 Complaint Profile

The following profile and demographic data is based on complaints only – including those completed and closed and those still under investigation. Enquiries are excluded from this data.

It is worth noting that, in some cases, a complaint represents more than the single complainant. In one case where a positive resolution was achieved, the result impacted seven other students; another case the complaint affected 127 apprentices and another complaint 11 students were affected. This means the outcomes of Queensland Training Ombudsman investigations have assisted well over the 525 people who have approached the OQTO to lodge a complaint. The actual figure is more in the vicinity of 670.

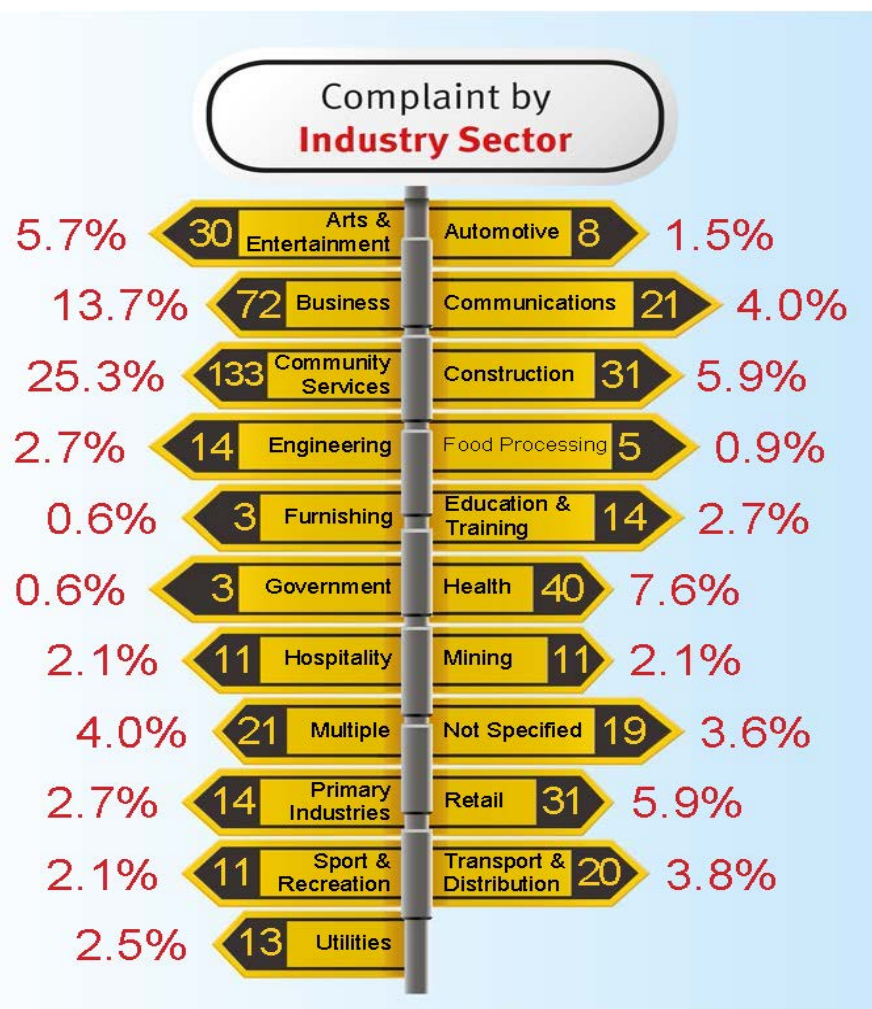
3.1 Complainants

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Complainant	Number	Percentage
Apprentices/Trainees/Students	392	74.6
Employers	16	3.0
Govt Agencies (ASQA, DET, OFT)	2	0.4
Industry (eg industry assoc/union etc)	1	0.2
Other Stakeholders	42	8.0
Parents/Guardians	45	8.6
RTO	24	4.6
VET Service Provider (non RTO)	3	0.6
Total	525	100.0

3.2 Complaints by Industry Sector

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017



3.3 Main Issues Raised

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

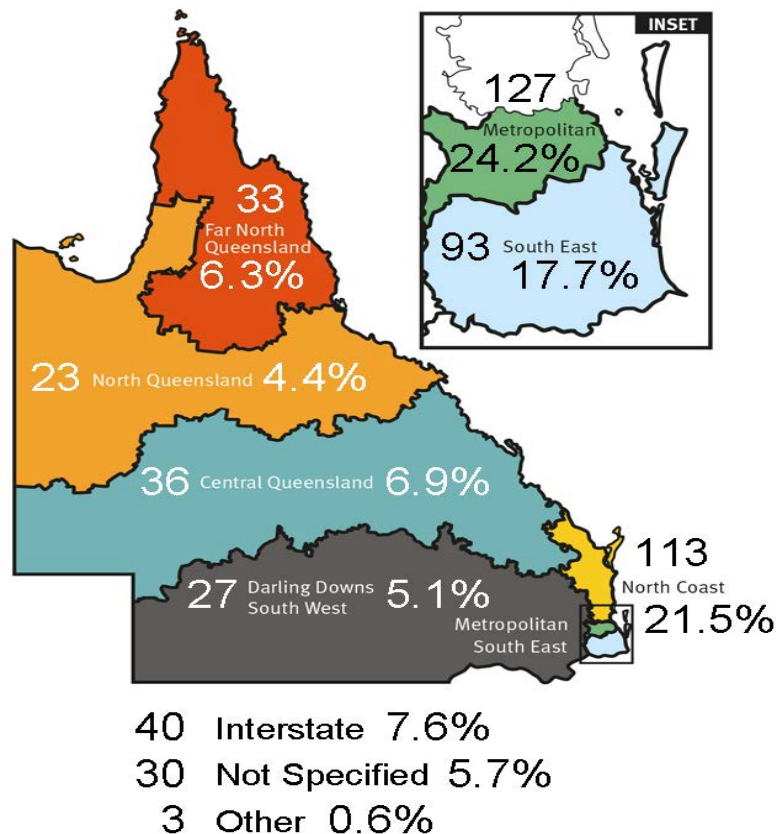
Issue	Number	Percentage
<p><i>Apprenticeships/Traineeships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (3) - Duration (1) - Employer Behaviour (11) - Enrolment/refund (1) - Fees (5) - Incentives (4) - No Training/Employment Provided (7) - Not Specified (4) - Other Stakeholder Behaviour (2) - Quality (1) - RTO Behaviour (19) - School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (7) 	65	12.4
<p><i>RTO/PQS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (7) - Employer Behaviour (1) - Enrolment/refund (8) - Fees (4) - No Training/Employment Provided (1) - Quality (10) - Recruitment/Marketing/Assessment (8) - RTO Behaviour (77) - VET in Schools (2) 	118	22.5
<p><i>VET FEE HELP</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (1) - Enrolment/refund (96) - Fees (5) - Quality (12) - Recruitment/Marketing/Assessment (1) - RTO Behaviour (36) 	151	28.8
<p><i>RTO Matter (including Fee for Service)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (1) - Duration (1) - Enrolment/refund (72) - Fees (10) - No Training/Employment Provided (2) 	153	29.1

Issue	Number	Percentage
- Quality (3)		
- Recruitment/Marketing/Assessment (1)		
- RTO Behaviour (63)		
<i>Other</i>		
- Current Govt Policy (7)		
- Employer Behaviour (2)		
- Enrolment/refund (12)		
- Not Specified (3)		
- Other Stakeholder Behaviour (7)		
- Quality (1)		
- Recruitment/Marketing/Assessment (3)		
- RTO Behaviour (3)		
Total	525	100.0

3.4 Complaints by Location

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Complaint profile: Location/Region



4 Complaint Outcomes

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Decisions	Number	Percentage of completed complaints
Completed - complainant outcome achieved	365	79.5
Completed – complainant outcome not achieved	81	17.7
Completed – no further action and formally withdrawn	13	2.8
Total	459	100.0
Complaint Refused	13	
Total completed	472	

As at 31 March 2017, 459 complaints have been completed and finalised. 365 (79.5%) achieved the complainant's desired outcome, including 68 cases of fee refund or waivers which totalled approximately \$323,202.

81 cases did not achieve the complainant's desired outcome. These cases included unsuccessful attempts by students to partially recover course fees, and complaints which were closed without investigation due to the complainant not responding despite multiple attempts by the OQTO to contact them for further information.

13 complaints were formally withdrawn as the complainant had settled the matter directly, and in some cases decided to continue with their studies.

13 complaints were refused for investigation due to the nature of the complaint. In one case, this involved a complaint about DET regional staff which was not appropriate for investigation by OQTO.

As at 31 March 2017, 53 complaints are still under investigation.

4.1 Formal Referrals to Other Agencies

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Referrals	Number
DET	27
ASQA	2
Office of Industrial Relations	1
Total	30

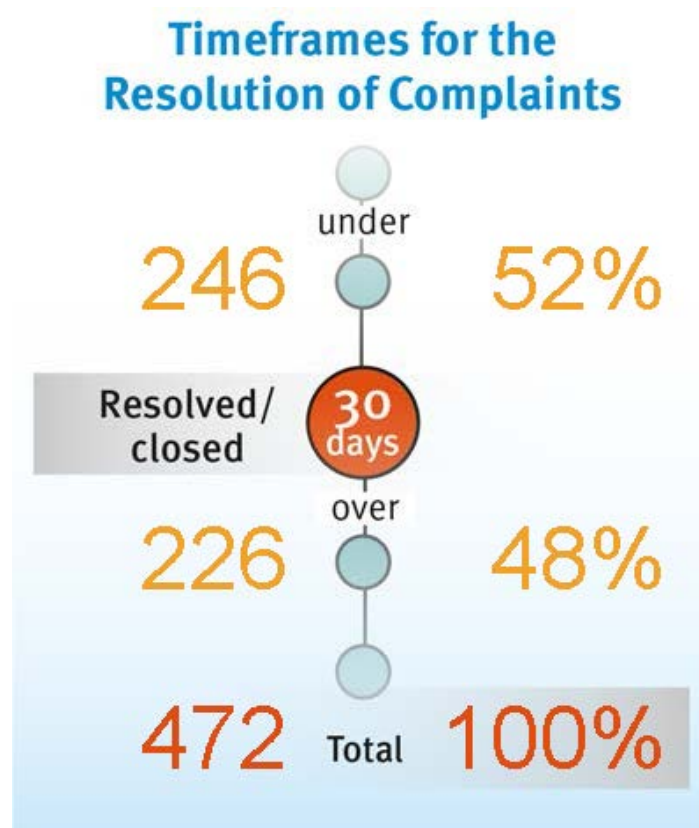
While there have been 30 formal referrals from the Queensland Training Ombudsman to other agencies, there have been other instances where verbal advice has been given to complainants suggesting other bodies who could also assist with their issue.

The QQTO strives to provide complainants with the full wrap-around support service and advice to help students and VET stakeholders as much as possible, even going so far as to assist complainants to draft correspondence and emails to support their case.

4.2 Timeframe to Close Complaints

14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017

Timeframe data below relates to all closed complaints, including withdrawn and refused complaints.



5. Enquiry Outcomes

107 enquiries have been received by QQTO between 14 September 2015 to 31 March 2017 and 102 of these have been satisfactorily answered.