

Performance report for the period 14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017

Fast Facts

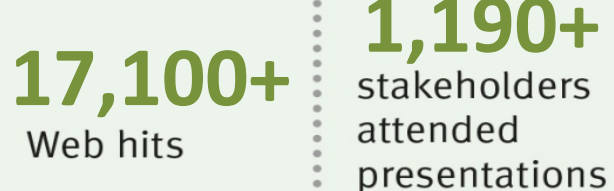
Complaints



Formal Enquiries



Other



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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 30 June 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 30 June 2017.

1.1 The First 21 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.

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), TAFE Queensland and the Office of the VET Student Loans Ombudsman.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman has delivered presentations on the role and functions of the Queensland Training Ombudsman at Townsville, Maroochydore, Toowoomba, Chermshire, Eight Mile Plains, Ipswich, Emerald, Logan, Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Cairns and North Lakes.

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.

All presentations have been positively received with over 1,190 people in attendance.

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 17,100 hits between 14 September 2015 and 30 June 2017. New branding has been completed and the development of a full Queensland Training Ombudsman website went live in early April 2017.

During 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 report was endorsed by the Minister on 7 May 2017 and the recommendations are being considered for implementation.

A review of quality outcomes delivered by Group Training Organisations has commenced and the Steering Committee met for the first time on 13 June 2017.

1.2 Complaints Summary

In the period 14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017, the Queensland Training Ombudsman received and assessed 761 complaints and enquiries. As expected, the majority of complainants, over 74%, are from apprentices, trainees and students. Over half of the complainants are female and over 46% of complainants reside in the Metropolitan or North Coast Region of Queensland.

Over a quarter of complaints relate to the community services sector, followed by business with just over 14%. RTO behaviour appears to be a predominant area of concern along with enrolment and refund issues.

Of particular note, the Queensland Training Ombudsman has:

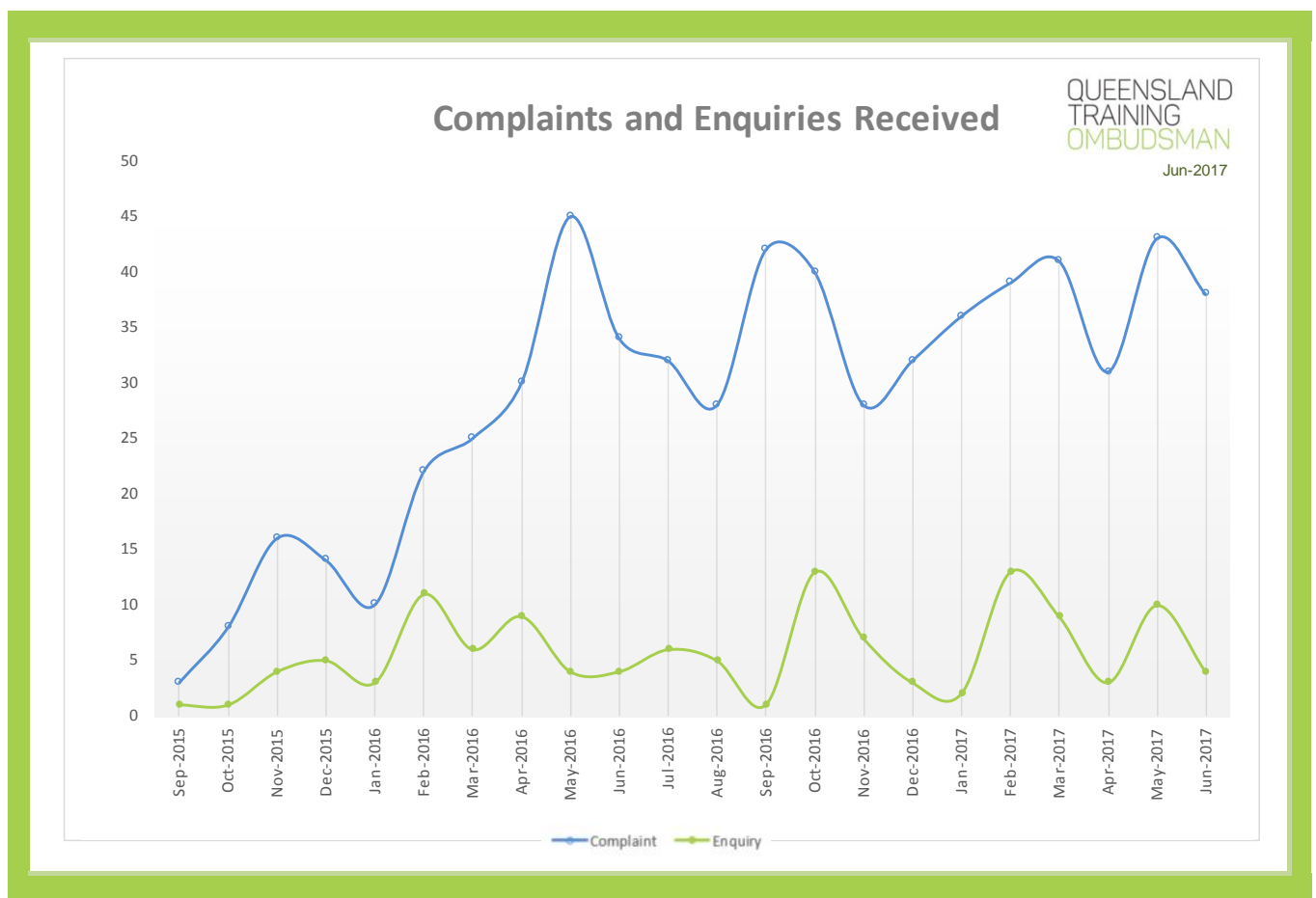
- achieved the complainants preferred outcome in over 78% of completed investigations;
- effected resolution of 82 cases regarding course fees to both parties' satisfaction and involving a refund or waiver of approximately \$401,306;
- formally referred 27 matters to the Department of Education and Training (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

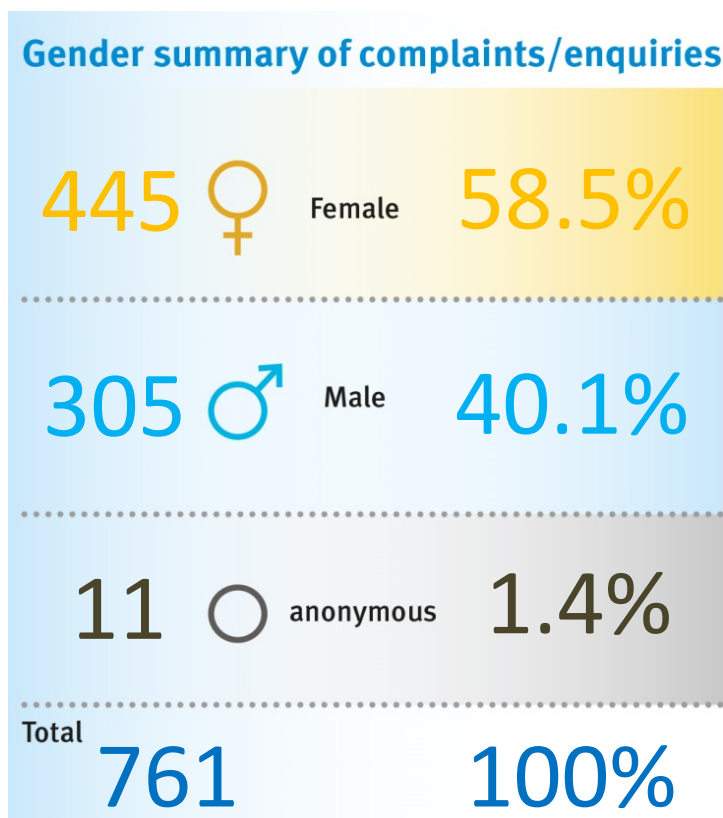
14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017



	Complaints	Enquiries	Total
Total complaints/enquiries for 2015/16	207	48	255
Total complaints/enquiries for 2016/17	430	76	506
Total complaints/enquiries since commencement	637	124	761

2.2 Complaints/Enquiries by Gender

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017



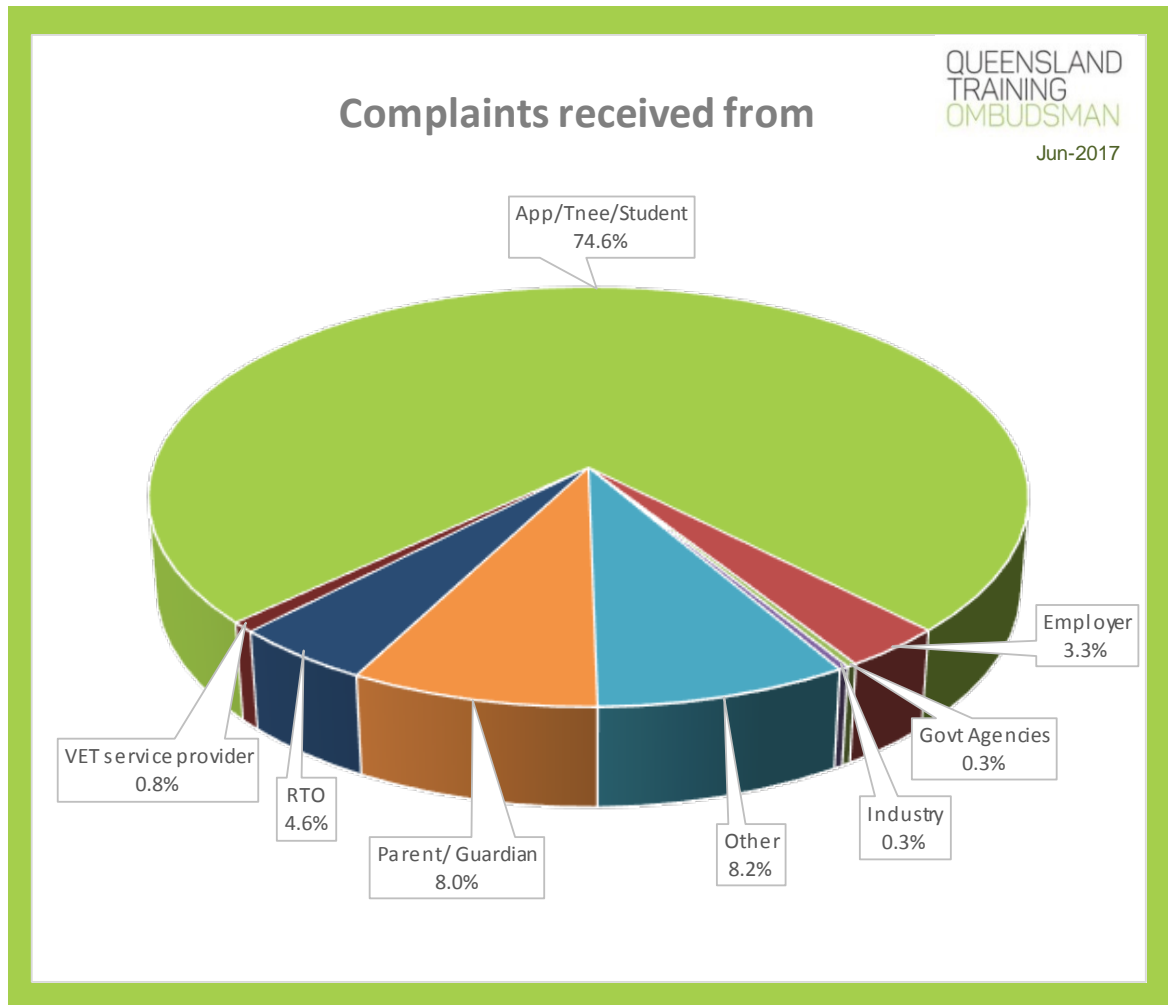
3 Complaint Profile

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 637 people who have approached the OQTO to lodge a complaint. The actual figure is more in the vicinity of 780.

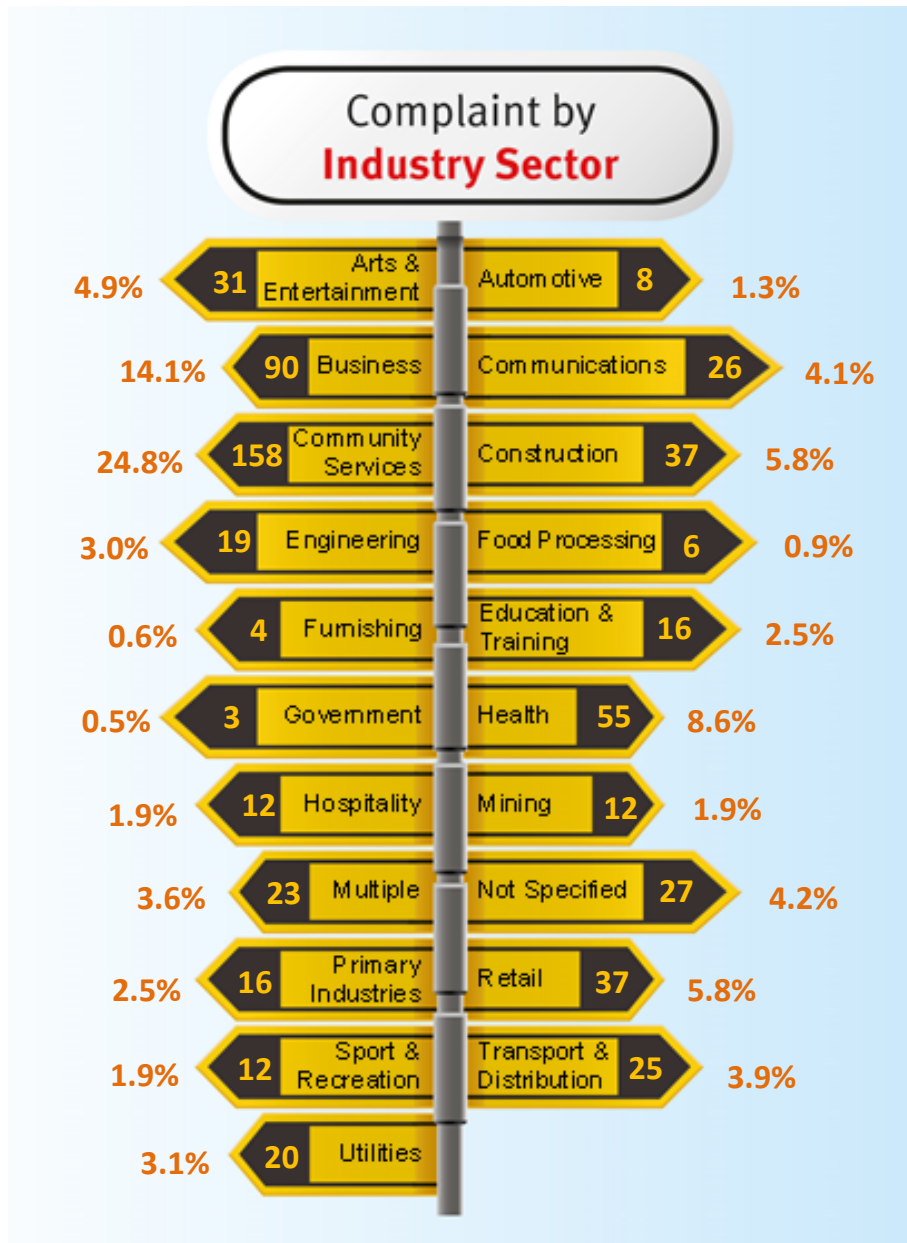
3.1 Complaints Received From

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017



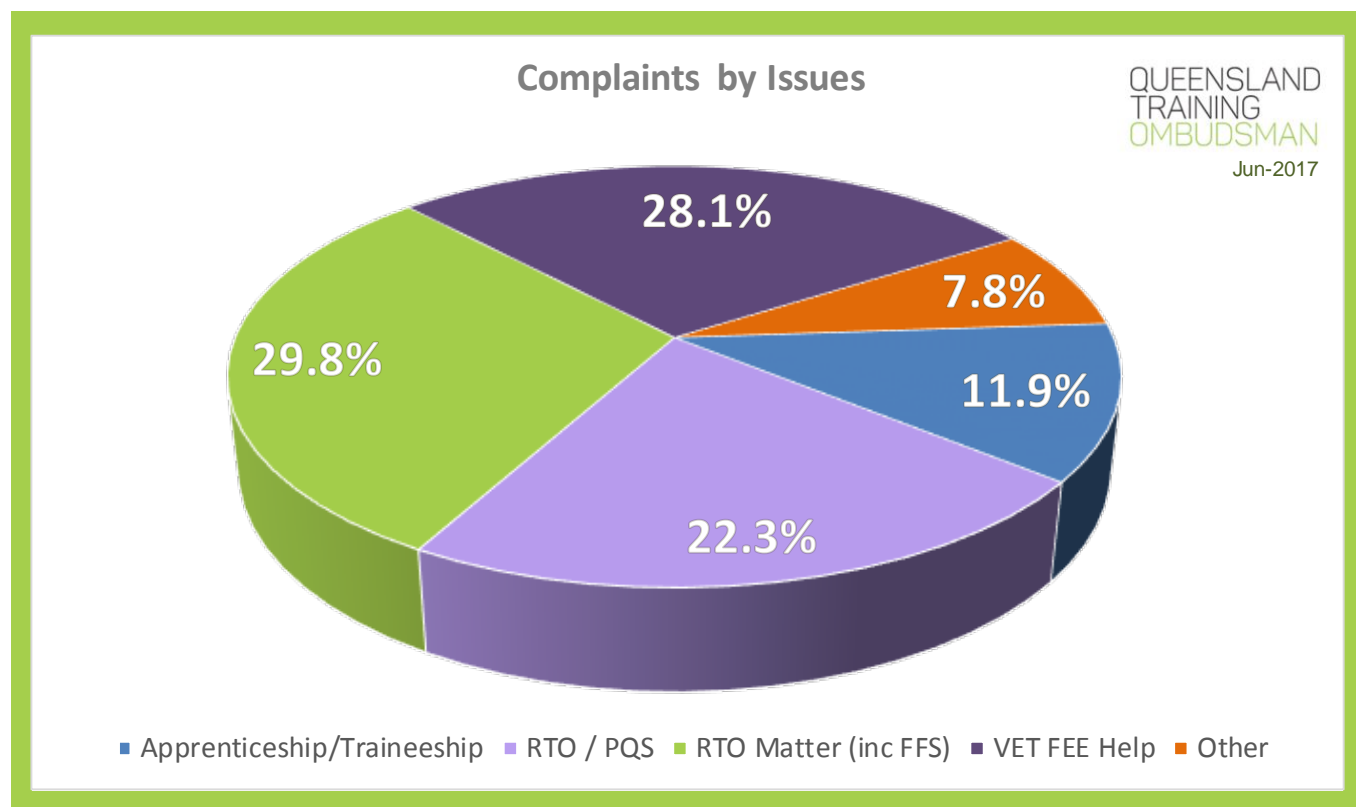
3.2 Complaints by Industry Sector

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017



3.3 Main Issues Raised

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017



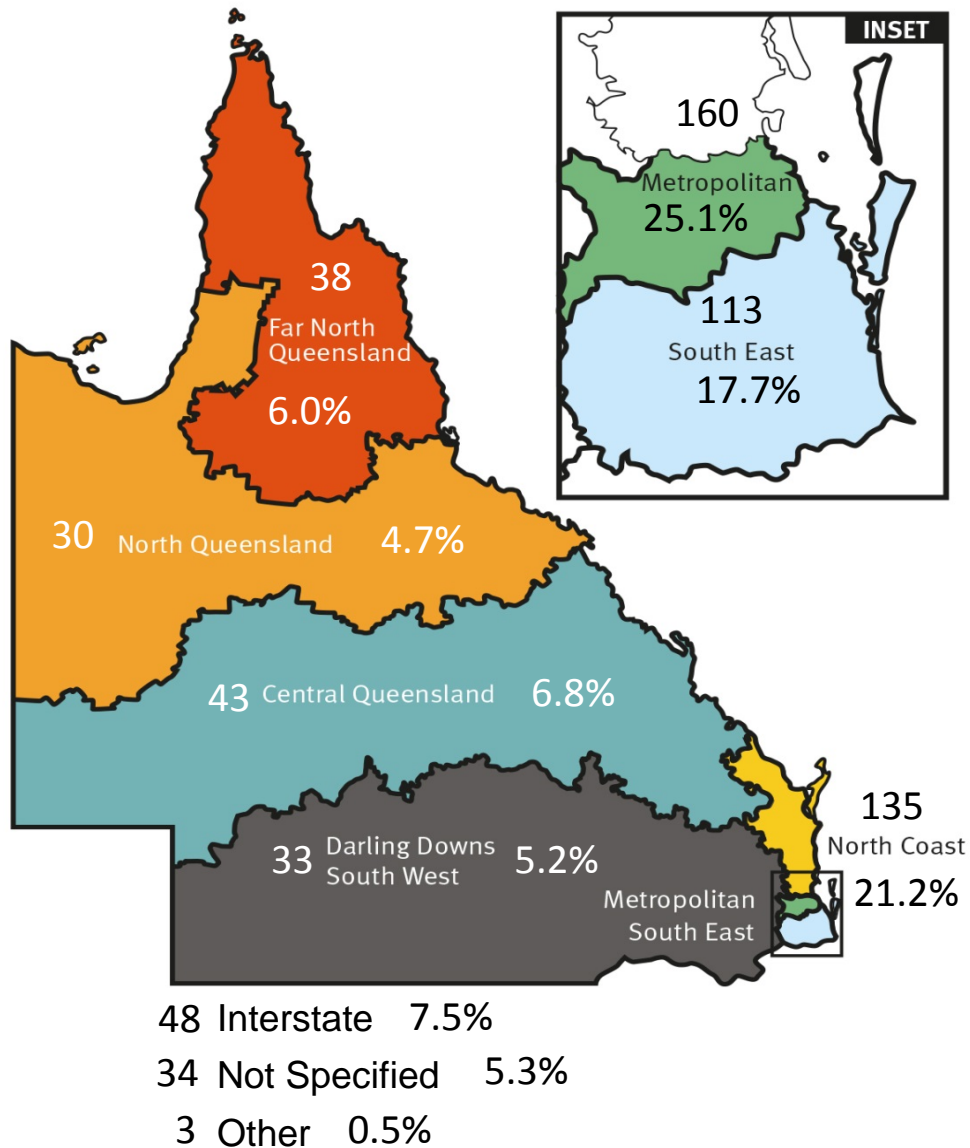
Issue	Number	Percentage
Apprenticeships/Traineeships		
- Current Govt Policy (3)		
- Duration (1)		
- Employer Behaviour (12)		
- Enrolment/ Refund (1)		
- Fees (5)		
- Incentives (5)		
- No Tg/Emp Provided (7)		
- Not Specified (4)		
- Other Stakeholder Behaviour (2)		
- Quality (1)		
- RTO Behaviour (28)		
- SATs (7)		
	76	11.9%

Issue	Number	Percentage
RTO/PQS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (7) - Employer Behaviour (1) - Enrolment/ Refund (17) - Fees (6) - No Tg/Emp Provided (1) - Other Stakeholder Behaviour (1) - Quality (10) - Recruit/ Market/ Assess (8) - RTO Behaviour (89) - VETiS (2) 	142	22.3%
VET FEE HELP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (1) - Enrolment/ Refund (112) - Fees (5) - Other Stakeholder Behaviour (1) - Quality (12) - Recruit/ Market/ Assess (1) - RTO Behaviour (47) 	179	28.1%
RTO Matter (including Fee for Service) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (3) - Duration (2) - Enrolment/ Refund (91) - Fees (13) - No Tg/Emp Provided (2) - Other Stakeholder Behaviour (1) - Quality (3) - Recruit/ Market/ Assess (2) - RTO Behaviour (73) 	190	29.8%
Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Govt Policy (7) - Employer Behaviour (2) - Enrolment/ Refund (14) - Not Specified (3) - Other Stakeholder Behaviour (15) - Quality (1) - Recruit/ Market/ Assess (3) - RTO Behaviour (5) 	50	7.8%
Total	637	100.0%

3.4 Complaints by Location

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017

Complaint profile: Location/Region



4 Complaint Outcomes

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017

Decisions	Number	Percentage of completed complaints
Completed - complainant outcome achieved	453	78.2%
Completed – complainant outcome not achieved	111	19.2%
Completed – no further action and formally withdrawn	15	2.6%
Total	579	100.0%
Complaint Refused	15	
Total completed	594	

As at 30 June 2017, 579 complaints have been completed and finalised. 453 (78.2%) achieved the complainant's desired outcome, including 82 cases of fee refund or waivers which totalled approximately \$401,306.

111 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.

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

15 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 30 June 2017, 43 complaints are still under investigation.

4.1 Formal Referrals to Other Agencies

14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017

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

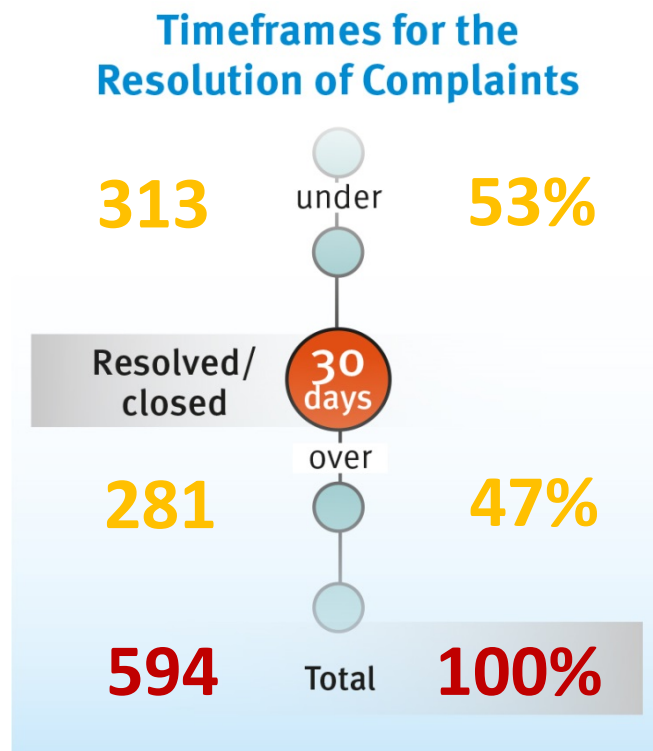
While there have been 30 formal referrals from the Queensland Training Ombudsman to other agencies, there have been other instances where verbal advice has been given to complainants suggesting other bodies who could also assist with their issue.

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 30 June 2017

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



5. Enquiry Outcomes

124 enquiries have been received by QQTO between 14 September 2015 to 30 June 2017 and 123 of these have been satisfactorily answered.