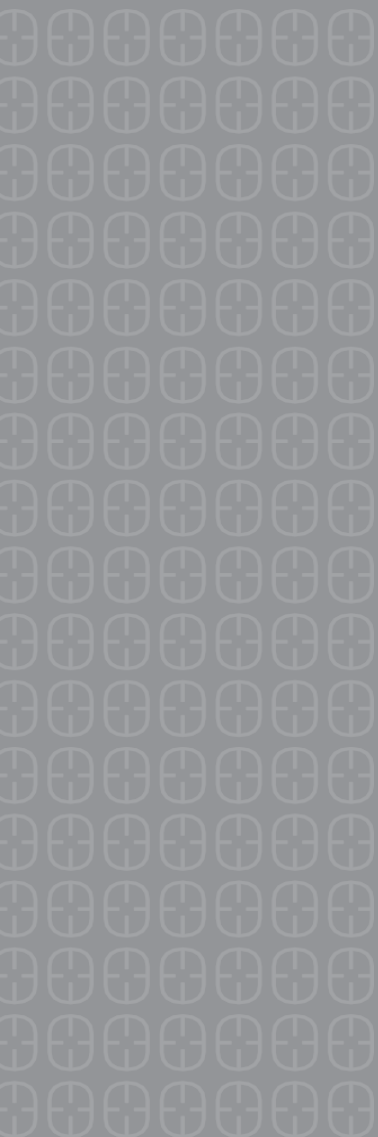


2024–25 ANNUAL REPORT



QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN

SEPTEMBER 2025

The Honourable Ros Bates MP
Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training
GPO Box 15483
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Minister Bates,

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman covering the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, as required under Section 112Z1 of the *Further Education and Training Act 2014*.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Favell
Queensland Training Ombudsman



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01 PROFILE

The Queensland Training Ombudsman is a statutory position that reports directly to the Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman is Mr Geoff Favell.

The main objective of the Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman (the Office) is to enhance the quality and integrity of vocational education and training (VET) in Queensland by providing a free, confidential and independent service to review and resolve enquiries and complaints from stakeholders in the VET system, including apprentices, trainees, students, employers, training providers and other parties.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman provides a dedicated single point of contact to support consumers with advocacy, comprehensive advice, referral services and solutions. All complaints and investigations are conducted free of charge and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.

Importantly, the Queensland Training Ombudsman identifies systemic issues and recommends changes to the Minister to positively impact the provision of quality VET in Queensland.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman is also required to carry out promotional and educational activities related to Queensland VET as well as undertake reviews and research commissioned by the Minister.

The Office complies with the Queensland Government's *Information Privacy Principles* and *Human Rights Act 2019*.

The Office Structure

In addition to the Queensland Training Ombudsman, the Office includes three public sector staff—an office manager, a principal executive officer and an executive officer. The office manager leads the administrative, record-keeping and performance reporting functions for the Office.

The two executive officer positions support the Queensland Training Ombudsman in investigating and resolving complaints and enquiries and in undertaking reviews.

Jurisdiction

The Queensland Training Ombudsman investigates complaints about the VET sector. While the majority of investigations completed are based on complaints, the Queensland Training Ombudsman also conducts investigations on his own initiative. The Minister may also refer matters for investigation.

Under the *Further Education and Training Act 2014* (the Act), the key functions of the Queensland Training Ombudsman include:

- receiving complaints about VET provision and matters relating to apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland
- referring complainants to appropriate agencies and supporting complainants to pursue their complaint
- making recommendations to the chief executive in relation to certain decisions* relating to apprenticeships and traineeships, including declarations of apprenticeships and traineeships and changing their nominal terms
- developing strategies and reporting to the Minister on ways to improve the quality of VET provision in Queensland
- identifying systemic issues arising out of complaints made to the Queensland Training Ombudsman and making recommendations to the Minister to strengthen systems, policies and processes in relation to funded registered training organisations (RTO) and matters relating to the apprenticeship and traineeship system
- undertaking promotional and educational activities in relation to the role of the Queensland Training Ombudsman, particularly in relation to quality within the VET sector
- undertaking or promoting reviews or research on matters relating to its functions, including reviews requested by the Minister
- performing any other associated functions relating to provision of quality VET conferred under the Act or any other Act.

* *Further Education and Training Act 2014* s.8(2)&(3)(c), s.10(1), s.17(2), s.20(8), s23(4), s.47, s.50, s101

The Act also sets out the conditions under which the Queensland Training Ombudsman may refuse to deal with a complaint. This includes incidents that occurred more than one year before the complaint was made, and complaints where the Queensland Training Ombudsman believes the complaint is vexatious, frivolous or lacks substance.

The Queensland Training Ombudsman is independent and may not be directed by any person in deciding how an investigation is undertaken.

Under the Act, the Queensland Training Ombudsman must provide an annual report to the Minister within three months of the end of the financial year.

02 QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

It is a great pleasure to introduce the 2024-25 Annual Report as the Queensland Training Ombudsman.

It has been a privilege to lead the Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman since 14 September 2015.

The work of the Office has been considerable and influential, based on the principles of:

- independence
- accessibility
- accountability
- efficiency
- effectiveness.

Highlights

During 2024-25, the Office received 503 complaints and enquiries about the VET sector, compared to 557 that were received in 2023-24. Over 59 per cent of complaints were completed within 30 days and 73 per cent completed in 45 days. The complainants' preferred outcome was achieved in 70 per cent of cases. The Office negotiated \$207,292 in course fee refunds or fee waivers during 2024-25.

These outcomes underline the vital role the Queensland Training Ombudsman plays in assisting stakeholders involved in the Queensland training system with an independent, impartial and unbiased process.

I would like to once again acknowledge the engagement and efforts displayed by Office staff. They continue to maintain high quality services for all stakeholders of the Queensland VET sector with a focus on delivering outcomes consistent with the human rights of Queenslanders.

During 2024-25, the *Review of the pricing and subsidy setting framework for the delivery of government subsidised VET in Queensland* was undertaken.

The report has been provided to the Director-General, Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET) and is currently under consideration.

The Office has also continued to work closely with DTET and the Electrical Safety Office in relation to the training of electrical apprentices, including participation in joint

visits to RTOs, to ensure apprentices are receiving quality training that also enables them to achieve a licensed outcome.

Engaging with Stakeholders

I have continued to meet with various stakeholders, including:

- Queensland Ombudsman
- Commonwealth VET Student Loans Ombudsman (VSLO)
- National Training Complaints Hotline (NTCH)
- Office of Fair Trading
- Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Queensland Department of Trade, Employment and Training
- Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia
- Australian Skills Quality Authority
- Apprentice Employment Network
- Construction Skills Queensland
- Manufacturing Skills Queensland
- TAFE Queensland
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Queensland Building and Construction Commission
- Office of Industrial Relations
- Commissioner for Electrical Safety
- Electrical Safety Office
- Queensland Small Business Commissioner
- Employer associations and unions.

As part of my responsibility to promote and educate stakeholders on the role and functions of the Office, more than 650 people attended presentations delivered across Queensland in 2024-25.

Discussions with the Queensland Ombudsman have resulted in an agreement that in certain circumstances complaints concerning TAFE Queensland received by the Queensland Ombudsman will be referred to the Office for assistance and advice.

I also continue to chair the Queensland VET Quality forum, with members including the Director-General of DTET and senior

representatives from Office of Industrial Relations, Australian Skills Quality Authority, Office of Fair Trading, Electrical Safety Office, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and Department of Housing and Public Works. This forum provides an avenue for information sharing and a co-ordinated approach to address quality issues in the Queensland VET system.

In addition, during 2024-25 I was a member of:

- Queensland Workforce Strategy Roundtable
- Building and Construction Training Advisory Committee.

Opportunities for the Future

As Queensland Training Ombudsman, I am committed to working with all stakeholders to improve quality in the VET sector.

The existence of the Queensland Training Ombudsman provides a positive avenue to deal with those situations where a VET stakeholder does not have a positive experience. While this may be challenging, it also provides an opportunity to build the reputation and profile of the Office, restore faith in the VET sector and ensure students and stakeholders in the VET system do not suffer disadvantage. The Office also works closely with the VSLO and NTCH to ensure an effective service is provided to Queenslanders.

Key issues identified through the complaints received, include:

- RTO behaviour, including poor communication
- fees and refunds
- training package implementation
- the link between the attainment of a qualification and the issuing of a licence
- apprentices not having access to appropriate supervision or the full range of work.

During 2025-2026, I will continue to work with key stakeholders to address these issues and other systemic issues as they are identified.

I look forward to continuing to promote the role of the Queensland Training Ombudsman in ensuring a quality VET sector across the state.

I also look forward to my ongoing involvement as we continue to reinforce the importance of the VET sector as a critical link between the aspirations of individuals and the opportunities created by industries, employers, and communities.

Geoff Favell

Queensland Training Ombudsman

03 2024-25 Performance Snapshot

Complaints			
404 RECEIVED	407 COMPLETED	59.7% COMPLETED WITHIN 30 DAYS	70% COMPLAINANT OUTCOME ACHIEVED

\$207,292 OF FEES REFUNDED/REIMBURSED/WAIVED

Formal Enquiries		Other	
99 RECEIVED	102 COMPLETED	7,782 WEB HITS	650+ STAKEHOLDERS ATTENDED PRESENTATIONS

The Office received and assessed 503 complaints and enquiries between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025. The majority of complainants (73.5 per cent) were apprentices, trainees and students. Sixty per cent of the complainants were female.

Over twenty-two per cent of complaints related to the community services sector, followed by health with 17 per cent.

Of the 407 complaints completed, 27 complaints were refused for investigation as they related to universities or government agencies and are therefore not within the remit of the Office. A total of 266 (70 per cent) achieved the complainants' desired outcome, including 83 cases of fee refunds or waivers totalling \$207,292.

The course fees refunded, reimbursed, or waived were a result of:

- students encountering medical conditions during their study which prevented them from completing their course
- students being impacted by a significant change in their financial circumstances during their study, which prevented them from paying course fees and from completing their course
- students seeking fee waivers for extensions to the duration of their course as a result of changed individual circumstances or concerns with the level of service provided by their RTO.

One hundred and four (27.4 per cent) cases did not achieve the complainants' desired outcome. The inability of students to provide sufficient evidence to support their complaint was the main reason an outcome was not able to be achieved. When a claim is refuted by the RTO, it is often necessary to request additional information from the complainant to substantiate the claim. In some instances, complainants advise they have no further evidence, or they fail to respond to repeated requests from the Office.

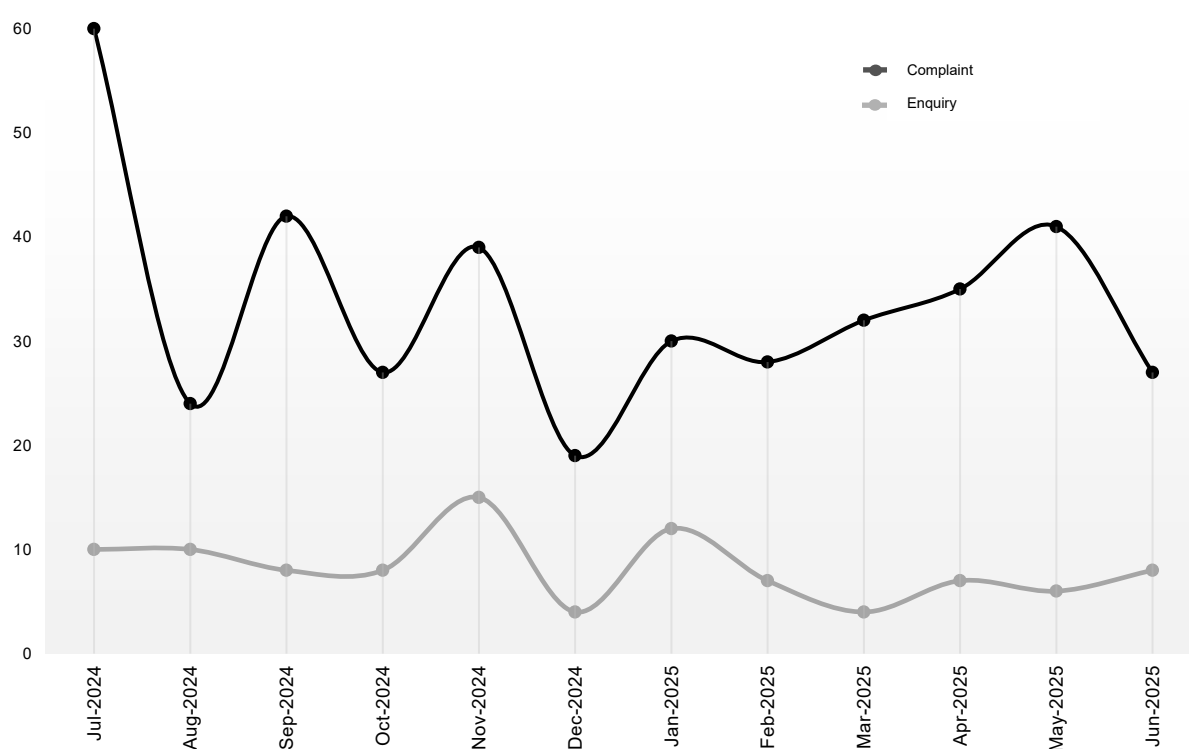
Ten (2.6 per cent) complaints were formally withdrawn as the complainant had settled the matter directly and, in some cases, had decided to continue with their studies.

The Office formally referred eight matters to the VSLO as they related to VET FEE-HELP/VET Student Loans.

Number of Complaints/Enquiries Received

Type	Complaints	Enquiries	Total
Total complaints/enquiries for 2015–16	207	48	255
Total complaints/enquiries for 2016–17	430	76	506
Total complaints/enquiries for 2017–18	295	62	357
Total complaints/enquiries for 2018–19	300	35	335
Total complaints/enquiries for 2019–20	325	60	385
Total complaints/enquiries for 2020–21	392	67	459
Total complaints/enquiries for 2021–22	377	69	446
Total complaints/enquiries for 2022–23	558	105	663
Total complaints/enquiries for 2023–24	454	103	557
Total complaints/enquiries for 2024–25	404	99	503
Total	3742	724	4466

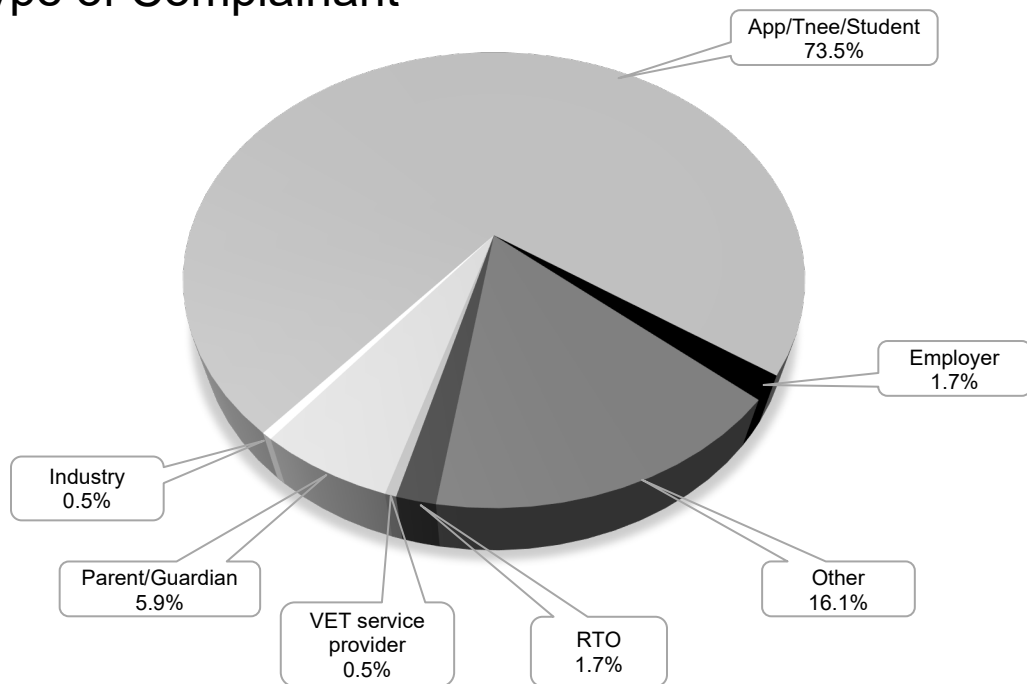
Timing of Complaints/Enquiries Received



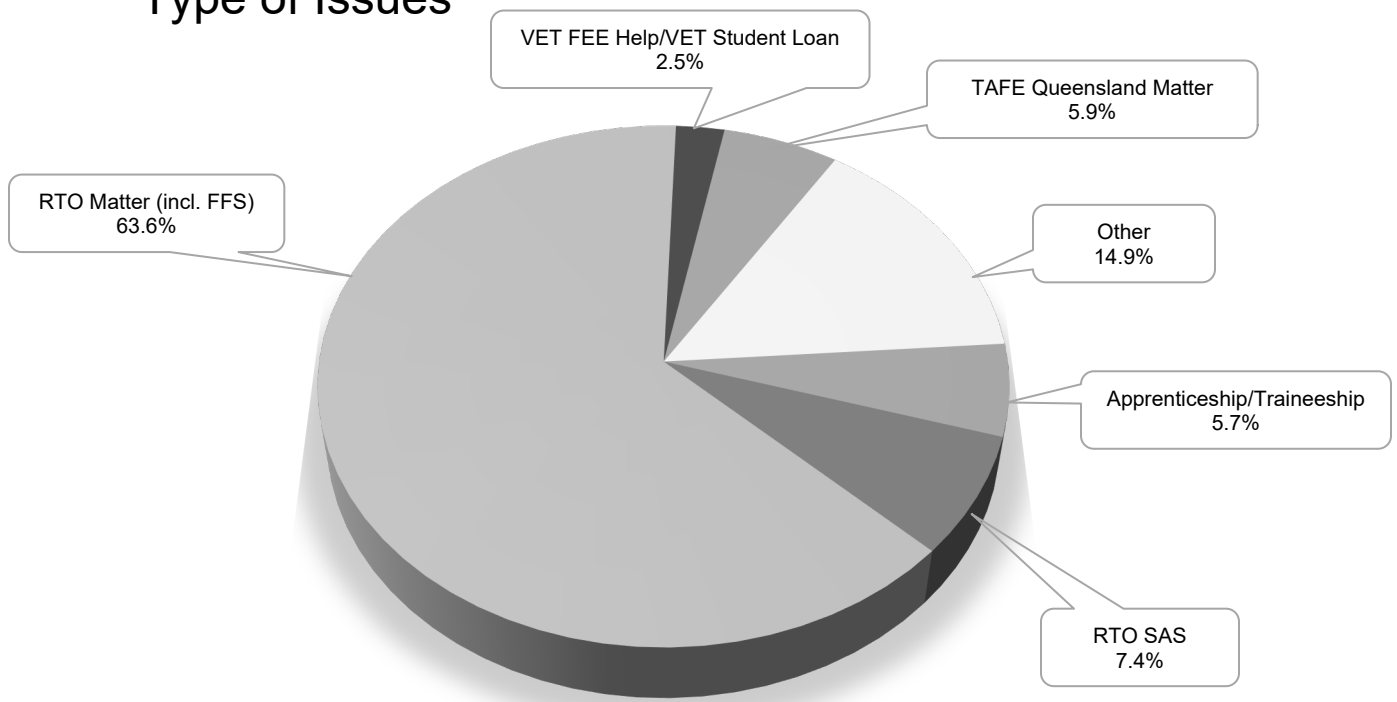
Gender Summary of Complaints/Enquiries Received

297	200	6	503
			TOTAL
FEMALE	MALE	ANONYMOUS	
60%	39%	1%	100%

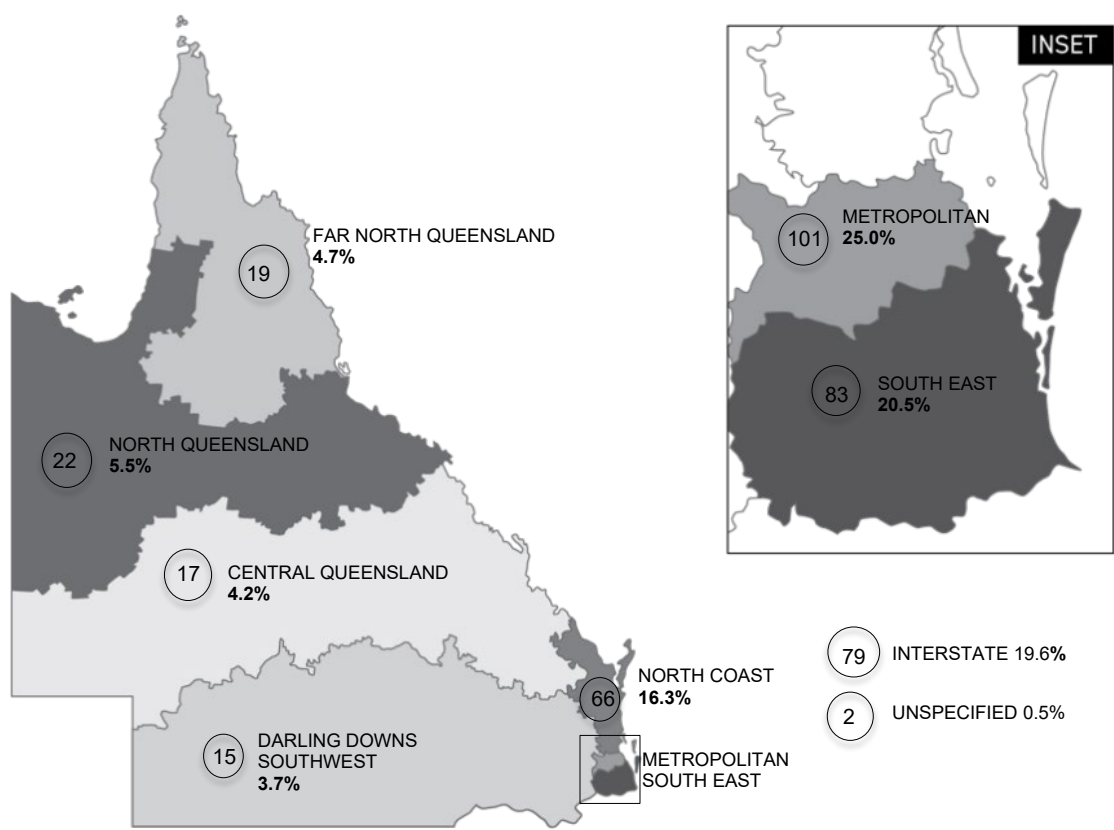
Type of Complainant



Type of Issues



Complaint Profile: Location/Region



Complaints by Industry Sector

11	ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT	2.7%	4	AUTOMOTIVE	1.0%
50	BUSINESS	12.4%	9	COMMUNICATIONS	2.2%
92	COMMUNITY SERVICES	22.8%	34	CONSTRUCTION	8.4%
6	ENGINEERING	1.5%	2	FOOD PROCESSING	0.5%
1	FURNISHING	0.3%	17	EDUCATION & TRAINING	4.2%
4	GOVERNMENT	1.0%	70	HEALTH	17.3%
13	HOSPITALITY	3.2%	1	MINING	1.0%
7	MULTIPLE	1.7%	4	NOT SPECIFIED	1.8%
14	PRIMARY INDUSTRIES	3.5%	10	RETAIL	2.5%
27	SPORT & RECREATION	6.7%	19	TRANSPORT & DISTRIBUTION	4.7%
9	UTILITIES	2.2%			

Complaint Outcomes

Decisions	Number	% of Completed Complaints
Completed - complainant outcome achieved	266	70.0%
Completed - complainant outcome not achieved	104	27.4%
Completed - no further action and formally withdrawn	10	2.6%
Total	380	100%
Complaint refused	27	
Total completed	407	

Formal Referrals

Agencies referred to	Number of referrals
VSLO	8
Total	8

Notices issued by the Minister under Section 112S of the *Further Education and Training Act 2014*

No notices were issued by the Minister under Section 112S of the *Further Education and Training Act 2014* during 2024-25.

04 Case Studies

REFUND AND WAIVER OF FEES

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant enrolled in a Complete Master Personal Trainers program that included a Certificate III and IV in Fitness. He only accessed one module out of eight for the Certificate III and none for the Certificate IV. As he withdrew from the course due to financial hardship, the RTO demanded full payment despite having locked him out of the course following withdrawal. The complainant stated he was not informed of the cooling off period and did not realise withdrawal after that period would incur a debt of the full course fees. He claimed he was given conflicting amounts that were owed and the RTO showed little regard for his financial difficulties.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO to discuss the issues raised and seek a resolution. The RTO subsequently agreed to cancel the course, waive the balance of fees and give a credit for money paid. They also advised they were providing communication training to staff particularly in relation to fees.  <i>I appreciate the time and effort your office invested in reviewing the details of my complaint and working toward a fair resolution. Your involvement not only brought a fair and respectful outcome but also helped reduce a significant amount of stress during a difficult financial period. Thank you again for your advocacy and support. I deeply appreciate the important work your office does to ensure fairness and accountability within the vocational education and training sector.</i>

CANCELLATION OF ENROLMENT AND WAIVER OF FEES

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant's son enrolled in a Certificate III and IV in Fitness. He had lost his job due to mental health issues and consequently his NDIS support co-ordinator contacted the RTO to withdraw him from the courses due to financial difficulties. The RTO continued to withdraw payments so the complainant stepped in to stop any further deductions. A financial hardship application was lodged requesting the debt be waived due to the complainant's son not working and the mental stress caused by the situation. The application was refused and the complainant's son received several overdue payment notices from the RTO.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO and discussed the issues that had been raised and the complainant's son's general situation. The RTO agreed to cancel the enrolment and waive all course fees.  <i>This news is awesome! Thank you so very much for your help and support with everything.</i>

CANCELLATION OF ONE COURSE WITH WAIVER OF FEES AND COMPLETION OF SECOND QUALIFICATION

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant enrolled in a Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. She was seeking to withdraw from her Diploma due to changes to regulations and course assessment processes introduced by the RTO. The changes added a degree of difficulty in obtaining and completing the placement component of the Diploma and she was not confident she would be able to complete this portion of the course. She had almost completed the Certificate III and, despite enrolling in a package deal, wanted to complete that qualification only and withdraw from the Diploma.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO and discussed the issues raised. The RTO considered the claims made and offered to waive the balance of outstanding fees, cancel the complainant's enrolment in the Diploma and extend the end date for her Certificate III course to 20 June 2025 to allow completion of the qualification.  <i>Thank you for this great outcome which has allowed me to attain a qualification and withdraw at no cost from the other enrolment.</i>

VOCATIONAL PLACEMENT ISSUES

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant enrolled in an Advanced Diploma of Cosmetic Dermal Science and had completed all theoretical components of the qualification. However, she was advised that unless additional fees were paid, the earliest possible date to complete the practical component of the course would be several months away.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO to discuss the issues raised and work towards a resolution. Following constructive discussions, an agreement was reached to place the complainant into an earlier block of training at no additional cost. This solution enabled the complainant to complete the qualification ahead of schedule, allowing her to begin applying new skills in the workplace sooner than anticipated.  <i>I really appreciate your follow up and time taken for my case, which yielded a great result.</i>

DIFFICULTY IN CANCELLING ENROLMENT / SEEKING REFUND OR FEE WAIVER

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant enrolled in a Certificate IV in Leisure and Health. Following a significant change in personal circumstances and financial situation, the complainant needed to withdraw from the qualification and was seeking a waiver of the remaining course fees, citing an inability to meet the financial obligations associated with continued enrolment.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO to discuss the matter and seek a resolution. Following a thorough review of the circumstances, the RTO agreed to withdraw the complainant's enrolment, waive the outstanding fee balance, and cease all debt collection activities. This outcome provided a fair and compassionate resolution for the complainant and helped restore confidence in the support process.  <i>Thank you so much for everything you have done to help.</i>

LACK OF SUPPORT FROM RTO TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant enrolled in a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Ongoing personal health challenges, which led to multiple deferrals and significant course time lost, meant they had not made meaningful progress in the qualification prior to the enrolment expiry date. The complainant stated the RTO had not provided required support and had denied an application for re-enrolment in the qualification.	The Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman contacted the RTO to discuss the matter and work toward a resolution. The RTO subsequently reviewed the case, resulting in an offer to continue the existing enrolment at no additional cost. In addition, an Academic Support plan was developed to outline tailored adjustments and support strategies, ensuring the complainant was well positioned to successfully complete their qualification.  <i>Thank you for all your support. This is a great outcome to assist me to finish the qualification.</i>

05 Financial statements

The financial statements for the Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman are included in the Department of Trade, Employment Training 2024-25 Annual Report. Separate financial statements are not required for the Office.

QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN

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