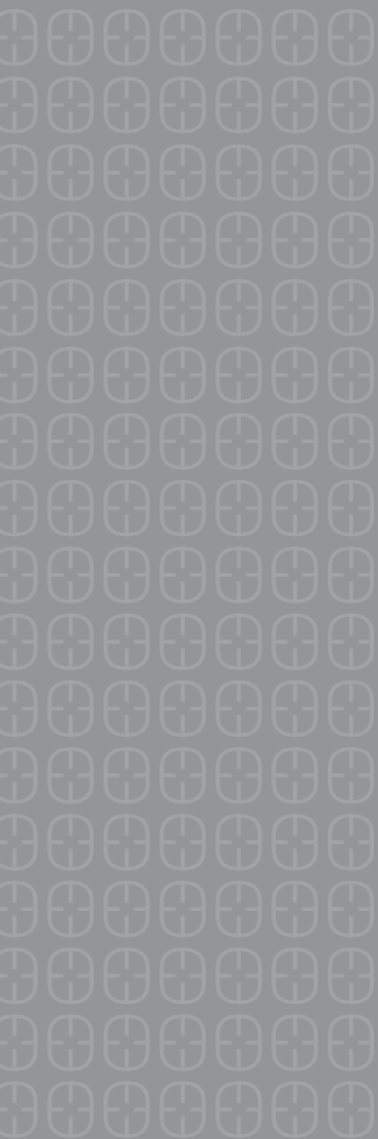


2025–26 ANNUAL REPORT



QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN

SEPTEMBER 2026

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 2025 to 30 June 2026, as required under Section 112Z1 of the *Further Education and Training Act 2014*.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Favell
Queensland Training Ombudsman



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	PROFILE	2
02	QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE.....	4
03	2025-26 PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT	6
04	CASE STUDIES	11
05	FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	13

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 2025-26 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 2025-26, the Office received 465 complaints and enquiries about the VET sector, compared to 503 that were received in 2024-25. Over 53 per cent of complaints were completed within 30 days and 66 per cent completed in 45 days. The complainants' preferred outcome was achieved in 66 per cent of cases. The Office negotiated \$99,743 in course fee refunds or fee waivers during 2025-26.

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 2025-26, the *Review of VET provision in Queensland* was undertaken. The review examined Total VET Activity and other data provided by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET) to identify any issues that may indicate a lack of access to quality training. The data was analysed at the State level and at the Local Government Area (LGA) level across all seven of DTET's regions. The full report and LGA snapshots are published on our website.

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.

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.

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 2026-2027, 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 2025-26 Performance Snapshot

Complaints			
401 RECEIVED	399 COMPLETED	53.9% COMPLETED WITHIN 30 DAYS	66.1% COMPLAINANT OUTCOME ACHIEVED

Formal Enquiries		Fees Recovered
64 RECEIVED	62 COMPLETED	\$99,743

The Office received and assessed 465 complaints and enquiries between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026. The majority of complainants (82.5 per cent) were apprentices, trainees and students. Fifty-eight per cent of the complainants were female.

Over 31 per cent of complaints related to the community services sector, followed by health with over 13 per cent.

Of the 399 complaints completed, 15 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 254 (66.1 per cent) achieved the complainants' desired outcome, including 48 cases of fee refunds or waivers totalling \$99,743.

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 sixteen (30.2 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.

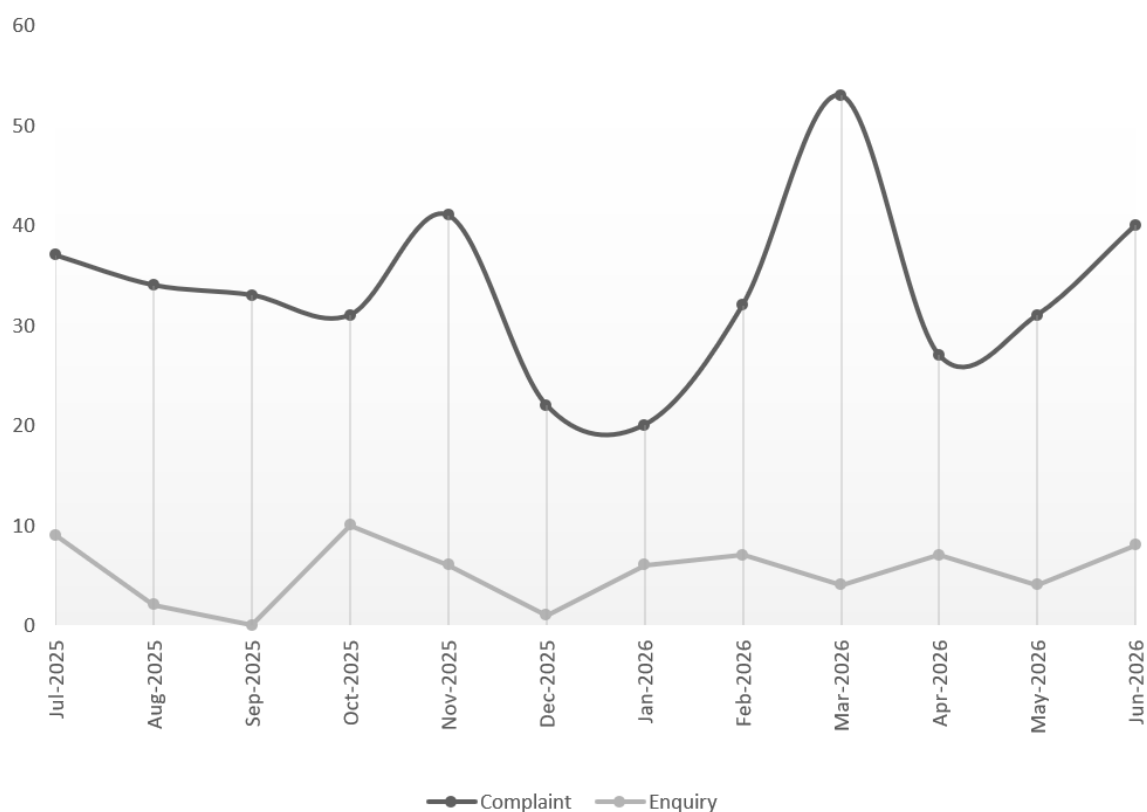
Fourteen (3.6 per cent) complaints were formally withdrawn as the complainant had settled the matter directly and, in some cases, had decided to continue with their studies.

The Office formally referred three 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 complaints/enquiries for 2025–26	401	65	465
Total	4143	788	4931

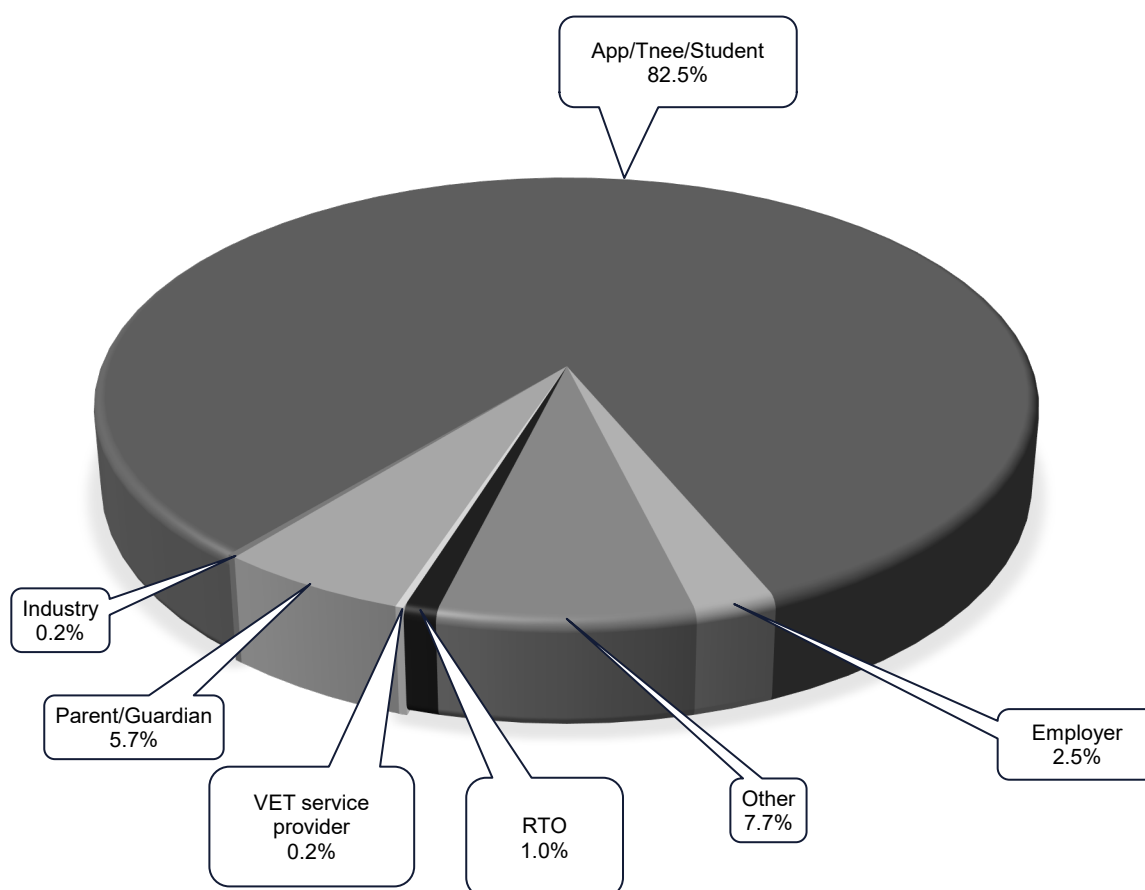
Timing of Complaints/Enquiries Received



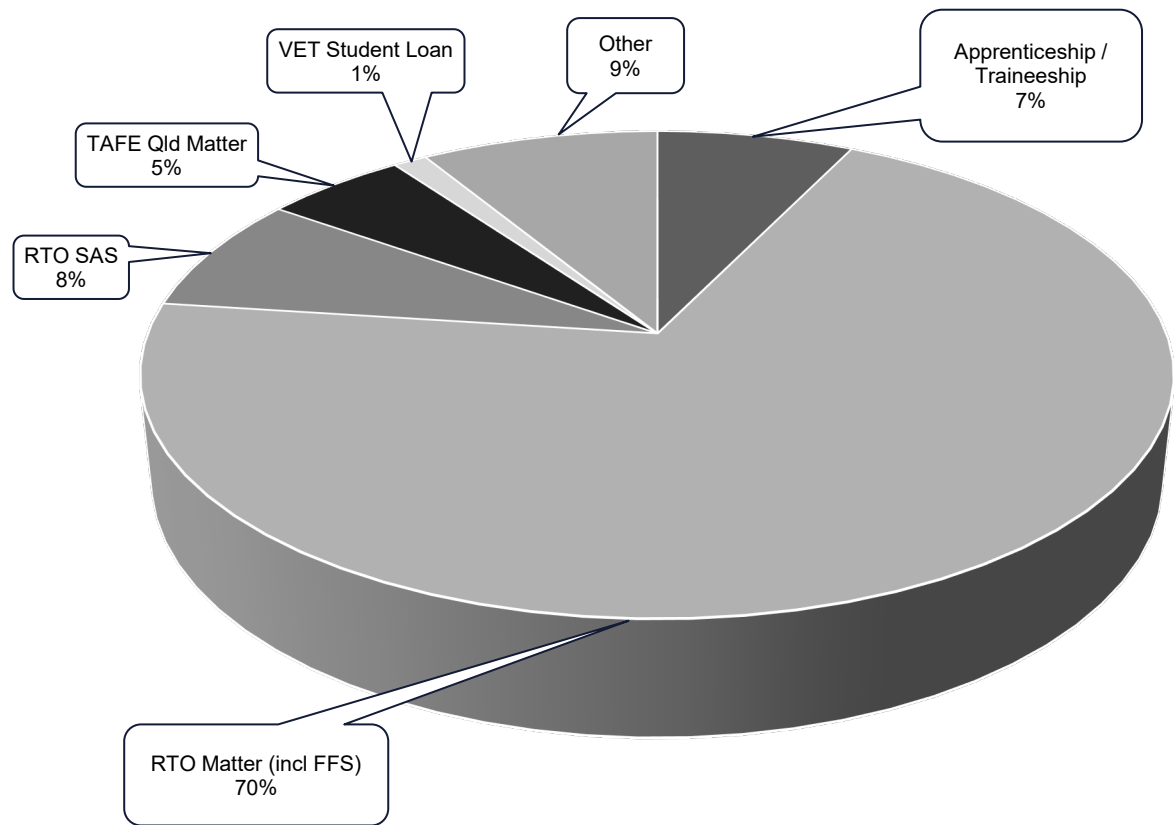
Gender Summary of Complaints/Enquiries Received

273	186	6	465
			TOTAL
FEMALE	MALE	ANONYMOUS	
58%	41%	1%	100%

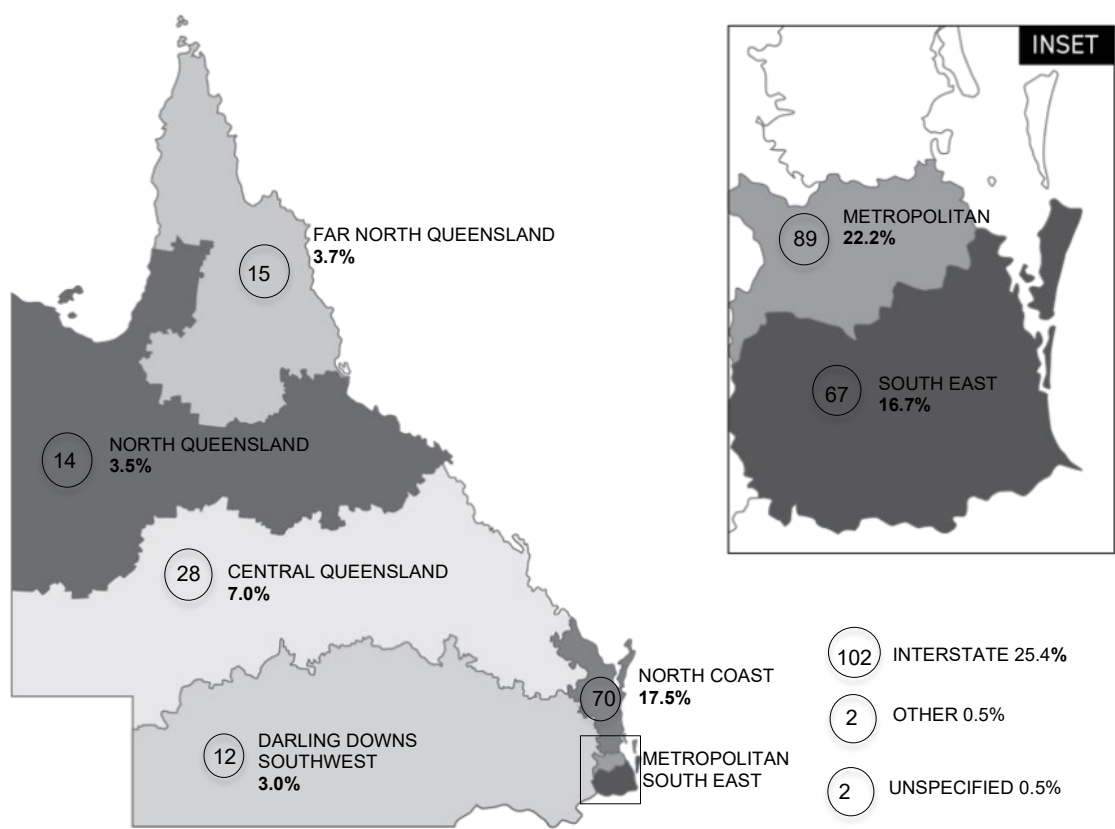
Type of Complainant



Type of Issues



Complaint Profile: Location/Region



Complaints by Industry Sector

4	ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT	1.0%	11	AUTOMOTIVE	2.7%
34	BUSINESS	8.5%	7	COMMUNICATIONS	1.8%
128	COMMUNITY SERVICES	31.9%	17	CONSTRUCTION	4.2%
9	ENGINEERING	2.2%	1	FOOD PROCESSING	0.3%
2	FURNISHING	0.5%	27	EDUCATION & TRAINING	6.7%
3	GOVERNMENT	0.8%	55	HEALTH	13.7%
4	HOSPITALITY	1.0%	0	MINING	0.0%
3	MULTIPLE	0.8%	6	NOT SPECIFIED	1.5%
12	PRIMARY INDUSTRIES	3.0%	14	RETAIL	3.5%
30	SPORT & RECREATION	7.5%	20	TRANSPORT & DISTRIBUTION	5.0%
14	UTILITIES	3.5%			

Complaint Outcomes

Decisions	Number	% of Completed Complaints
Completed - complainant outcome achieved	254	66.1%
Completed - complainant outcome not achieved	116	30.2%
Completed - no further action and formally withdrawn	14	3.6%
Total	384	100%
Complaint refused	15	
Total completed	399	

Formal Referrals

Agencies referred to	Number of referrals
VSLO	3
Total	3

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 2025-26.

04 Case Studies

DELAYS IN QUALIFICATION BEING ISSUED

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant was enrolled in a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care and was experiencing issues regarding significant and unjustified delays in the marking of her assessments and finalisation of her qualification.	The Office contacted the RTO to discuss the issues raised and seek a resolution. The RTO subsequently completed the marking process and issued the qualification.  <i>I truly appreciate the support and professionalism shown by your office. I believe that my college responded only after I contacted your organisation, which demonstrates how important and effective your service is for students who struggle to have their concerns addressed. Thank you once again for your assistance. I hope more students who face similar challenges become aware of the valuable role the Queensland Training Ombudsman plays in supporting fair and timely outcomes in vocational education.</i>

COMPLAINANT UNABLE TO COMPLETE COURSE DUE TO RESTRICTIONS BY PLACEMENT FACILITY

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant was enrolled in a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. She could not complete her placement as her employer at the facility would not allow videotaping of her work to provide evidence of her competency. Despite several suggestions made, the RTO was firm on its requirement for taping the evidence.	The Office contacted the RTO to discuss the issues raised and seek a resolution. The RTO stated they were required to obtain evidence of the student's skills and, as she was an online student, there was no other way to obtain the evidence required. The Office was able to produce documents from ASQA and the Jobs and Skills Council specifying the assessment requirements especially concerning direct observation. The RTO subsequently made the necessary arrangements for the assessor to visit the facility and the student completed the placement and received their qualification.  <i>Thank you so much. I'm really pleased with the outcome as I would still be in dispute with the RTO without the assistance you provided.</i>

INABILITY TO CONTINUE PAYING COURSE FEES

THE COMPLAINT	THE RESOLUTION
The complainant was on a disability pension and was struggling to pay the course fees for the qualification in which he enrolled. The RTO had sent his account to the debt collector who were considering court action.	The Office had discussions with the RTO regarding the complainant's circumstances and they agreed to waive the balance of the outstanding fees.  <i>Thank you so much for your assistance with this matter. I am very pleased with the result.</i>

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER RTO CAUSED COMMUNICATION ISSUES

THE COMPLAINT

The complainant was enrolled in a Certificate III in Individual Support. He changed RTOs and had completed his placement with the original RTO. The placement facility would not forward details of the placement work stating they only had an arrangement with the original RTO. The complainant was frustrated as the new RTO could not deem him competent without the placement records.

THE RESOLUTION

The Office contacted both RTOs and the placement facility and was able to obtain the placement records allowing the completion of the training and the new RTO to issue the qualification.

 *Thank you I am very grateful for the assistance provided as I had reached a dead end and did not think I would get my qualification.*

DELAYS IN ASSESSMENT MARKING / ISSUANCE OF QUALIFICATION

THE COMPLAINT

The complainant was enrolled in a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and raised concerns regarding poor communication from the RTO. They outlined significant delays being experienced in having their submitted work assessed, despite multiple attempts to engage with the RTO to resolve.

THE RESOLUTION

The Office contacted the RTO to discuss the matter and seek a resolution. The RTO provided details pertaining to delays in marking assessments and advised they are putting actions in place to rectify the matter. The RTO subsequently advised they completed the required assessments and issued the qualification to the complainant.

 *Thank you so much for your help. You managed to help resolve this in less than a day. After waiting more than nine weeks for an outcome, I had genuinely started to wonder whether I would ever receive my certificate. I really appreciate your assistance and the time you took to help me. Thank you again for your support.*

USI RECORD NOT UPDATED

THE COMPLAINT

The complainant raised concerns regarding their Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology. The complainant had completed their certificate early in 2025 and been issued the qualification. However, the USI record had not been updated.

THE RESOLUTION

The Office had several conversations with the RTO to discuss the matter and outline ways to resolve the issue. The RTO responded to advise they were processing the complainant's USI record and it would be updated within the week.

 *I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you for all your help and support. After more than 14 months, I'm very happy that my USI upgrade has finally been completed. I really appreciate the efforts of everyone involved in helping move the process forward. A special thank you to the OQTO Officer for his patience, kindness, and dedication throughout this journey. Your support made all the difference, and I'm truly grateful.*

05 Financial statements

The financial statements for the Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman are included in the Department of Trade, Employment Training 2025-26 Annual Report. Separate financial statements are not required for the Office.

QUEENSLAND TRAINING OMBUDSMAN

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