

Bi-annual progress report

1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021



National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman

Please note: our data is subject to change due to ongoing investigations and quality assurance activities. If you have a question about our data, please contact us on 1300 795 265 or by email via complaints@nhpo.gov.au.

920

approaches
received



Up 105 per cent from
July to December 2020



558

Ombudsman
complaints received



Up 112 per cent from
July to December 2020



8

FOI matters
received



Compared to 10 in
July to December 2020



6

privacy
complaints received



Compared to 0 in
July to December 2020



Review into
the cosmetic
surgery industry
announced



Review into
accreditation
processes
progressed



1

FOI review
decision
published



5

notifiable
data breaches
assessed

Complaints to the Ombudsman



Focused on implementing new early resolution processes to address complaints quickly, efficiently and effectively

51



preliminary
inquiries made

Up 66 per cent from
July to December 2020

61



early resolution
transfers made

Down 13 per cent from
July to December 2020

10



investigations
launched

Down 90 per cent from
July to December 2020

598



Ombudsman
complaints
finalised

Up 172 per cent from July to December 2020



Stage complaints were finalised

438 assessment

48 preliminary
inquiry

56 early resolution
transfer

56 investigation

Bi-annual progress report

1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021



National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman

Creating positive change

The office maximised opportunities to create systemic change during this period. Highlights included:

- the Ombudsman and Commissioner joining the independent review into the cosmetic surgery industry as an expert panel member. The review will consider how regulatory processes can keep pace with changes in the industry.
- progressing the office's review into accreditation processes. Between July and December 2021, this primarily involved consulting with specialist medical colleges and other accreditation authorities to better understand existing complaint and appeal processes and to identify opportunities for improvement.
- complaint resolution work leading to system-wide improvements in the operation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The main areas of focus have included improving timeliness and the quality of communication in regulatory processes.

Increasing accessibility

The office improved its accessibility by launching its social media presence in October 2021. The office focussed on engaging with health practitioners due to their under-representation in complaints data. Staff have reported receiving more approaches from health practitioners who wanted to raise concerns about their experiences with Ahpra and the Boards.

The office also recognised the need to more proactively consider its lesser known privacy and freedom of information (FOI) functions. As part of this work, the office focussed on providing staff training and improved communications. In response, the office saw an increase in the number of complaints it received, including:

- 6 privacy complaints (up from zero between 1 July to 31 December 2020)
- 5 notifications of data breaches received from Ahpra (up from zero between 1 July to 31 December 2020).

Adapting to COVID-19

As the effects of the pandemic continue to permeate, the office has responded quickly and effectively to surges in enquiries and complaints about COVID-19 related issues.

The office received a wave of complaints in November 2021 (268) which mostly related to statements made by Ahpra and the Boards about COVID-19 vaccinations. To date, the office has found these statements to be consistent with the Boards' role in determining what is expected of health practitioners.

However, the office also saw an increase in complaints it received that were not related to COVID-19. The office therefore focussed on supporting its small team to continue to provide an effective, efficient and empathetic complaint-handling service while working from home.

The office continues to prioritise health and wellbeing in the workplace.