



National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman

Biannual performance report

1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

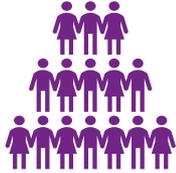
Bi-annual progress report overview

1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

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.

960

approaches
received



Up from 919 in July
to December 2021



344

Ombudsman
complaints received



Down from 558 in July
to December 2021



14

FOI matters
received



Up from 8 in July to
December 2021



3

privacy
complaints received



Down from 5 in July
to December 2021



594

enquiries
received



Up from 343 in July
to December 2021



20,926

new website
visitors



Up from 10,656 in
July to December 2021



2

FOI review
decisions
published



5

notifiable
data breaches
assessed

Complaints to the Ombudsman

86

early resolution
transfers made



Up from 61 in
July to December 2021



57

preliminary
inquiries made



Up from 54 in
July to December 2021



7

investigations
launched



Down from 11 in
July to December 2021



Review conducted
into Ahpra's
vexatious notifications
framework



Review into
accreditation
processes
progressed



Submissions made on the:

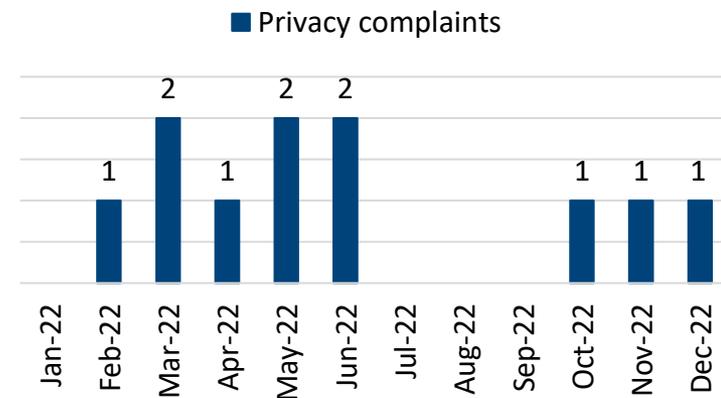
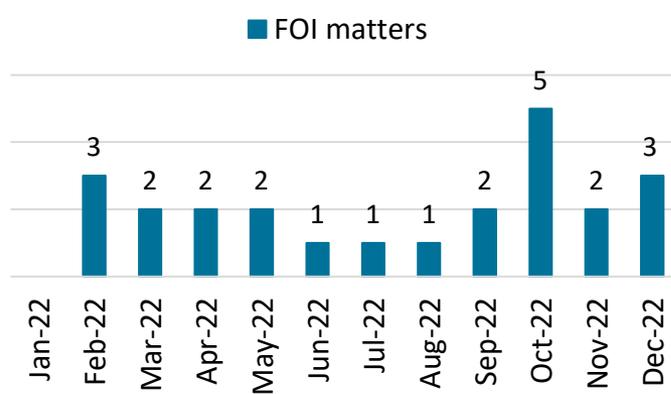
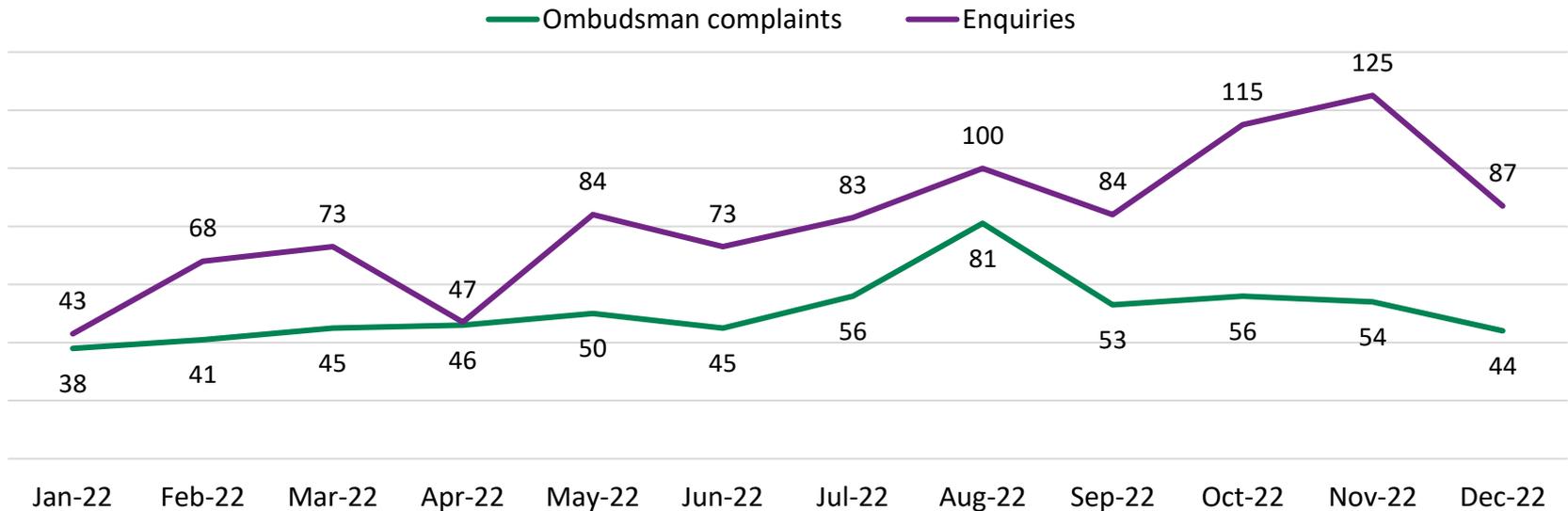
- shared Boards' English Language Skills Registration Standard
- Medical Board's regulation of medical practitioners who provide cosmetic medical and surgical procedures

Approach trends

1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022



National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman



Ombudsman complaints received from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

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Types of complaints received

221 ↑ Up from 163 in the same period last financial year
Notification-related

83 ↑ Up from 71 in the same period last financial year
Registration-related

9 Pandemic policy/response
31 Other types

Who made complaints

180 health practitioners
164 Non-practitioners

↑ Up from 160 in the same period last financial year
↓ Down from 398 in the same period last financial year

Professions most complaints were about

191 medical (Down from 423 in the same period last financial year)
47 Nursing (Up from 38 in the same period last financial year)
38 psychology (Up from 31 in the same period last financial year)

Location the complaints were made from



4 Northern Territory
56 Queensland
47 Western Australia
12 Australian Capital Territory
37 New South Wales
25 South Australia
101 Victoria
7 Tasmania
52 Unknown
3 Overseas

Most common notification-related issues that drove complaints

1. Notifier believes the decision to take no further action at the assessment stage is unfair or unreasonable
2. Notifier believes an active notification has been unreasonably delayed
3. Practitioner believes an active notification has been unreasonably delayed

Most common registration-related issues that drove complaints

1. Practitioner seeking general registration believes the English Language Skills Registration Standard has been applied unfairly
2. Practitioner seeking general registration believes the assessment of an international qualification has been unreasonably delayed
3. Practitioner seeking general registration believes the assessment of an international qualification is unfair or unreasonable

Resolution of Ombudsman complaints from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

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Early resolution mechanisms

217 

complaints
finalised at the
assessment stage

Down from 436 in
the same period
last financial year 

53 

complaints finalised
at the preliminary
inquiry stage

Up from 51 in
the same period
last financial year 

76 

complaints finalised
at the early resolution
transfer stage

Up from 56 in
the same period
last financial year 

Most common outcomes at early resolution stages (assessment, preliminary inquiry and early resolution transfer)

1. Investigation was not warranted in the circumstances
2. Ahpra's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable
3. Further action was inappropriate as the matter was active with Ahpra/a Board
4. Complainant did not provide requested information
5. Complaint was about the merits of a decision made by Ahpra and a Board (not about an administrative action)

Investigations

14 

complaints
finalised at the
investigation stage

 Down from 54 in the same
period last financial year

Most common investigation outcomes

1. We provided a further explanation to the complainant
2. We provided feedback to Ahpra
3. We provided positive feedback to Ahpra
4. We provided formal comments and suggestions for improvement to Ahpra
5. Ahpra agreed to assess new material provided by the complainant

Bi-annual progress report observations

Influencing systemic improvement

The NHPO worked to create positive systemic change during this period, including through:

- undertaking its independent review into the implementation of Ahpra's framework for identifying and dealing with vexatious notifications. The review is considering, and where necessary will make recommendations regarding, Ahpra's approach to identifying and managing vexatious notifications.
- progressing the office's review into accreditation processes. Between July and December 2021, this primarily involved finalising the review's recommendations for specialist medical colleges and consulting on these draft recommendations.
- responding to consultation processes relevant to the National Scheme, including the shared Boards' English Language Skills Registration Standard and the Medical Board's consultation on the regulation of medical practitioners who provide cosmetic medical and surgical procedures.

Effective complaint handling

The NHPO has seen a significant increase in the number of enquiries it receives. When compared with the bi-annual performance report from the previous financial year, there was a 73 per cent increase in the number of enquiries received.

The office has also received more complaints to the Ombudsman related to notifications and registration matters than at the same time in the last financial year. Notification-related complaints were up by 36 per cent and registration-related complaints were up by 17 per cent. Concern about unreasonable delay has been a strong driver of complaints.

The NHPO continued to effectively manage this increased workload and ensure it delivered quality complaint-handling services and evidence-based suggestions for improvement. Areas of interest have included Ahpra and the Boards' temporary position on remote proctored English language tests and the maintenance of the student register.

Accepting accreditation-related complaints

The office focussed on preparing for its expanded role regarding complaints about accreditation organisations undertaking accreditation functions under the National Law and specialist medical colleges in relation to approved programs of study. This included:

- working with accreditation organisations to determine information sharing arrangements and escalation pathways
- updating the NHPO's case management system to ensure complaints about accreditation authorities are recorded and handled appropriately
- revising the NHPO's online complaint form and website to facilitate making complaints about accreditation authorities
- producing template correspondence and communications regarding the NHPO's expanded role
- providing documentation and staff training about managing accreditation-related complaints.