



National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman

Our work in March 2023

Monthly approaches overview

1 March 2023 to 31 March 2023

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.

199

approaches
received



Up from 122 in
March 2022



58

Ombudsman
complaints received



Up from 45 in
March 2022



1

FOI matters
received



Down from 2 in
March 2022



1

privacy
complaint received



Down from 2 in
March 2022



139

enquiries
received



Up from 73 in
March 2022



Ombudsman complaints
were made by 47
individuals (up from 43
in March 2022)



0

FOI review
decisions
published



0

notifiable data
breach assessed
(0 in March
2022)

Complaints to the Ombudsman

24

early resolution
transfers made



Up from 7 in
March 2022



9

preliminary
inquiries made



Up from 5 in
March 2022



1

investigations
launched



Down from 6
in March 2022



66

Ombudsman
complaints finalised

Up from 61 in March 2022



Stage complaint was finalised

34

assessment

10

preliminary
inquiry

17

early resolution
transfer

5

investigation

Notification-related complaints to the Ombudsman

1 March 2023 to 31 March 2023



National Health Practitioner Ombudsman

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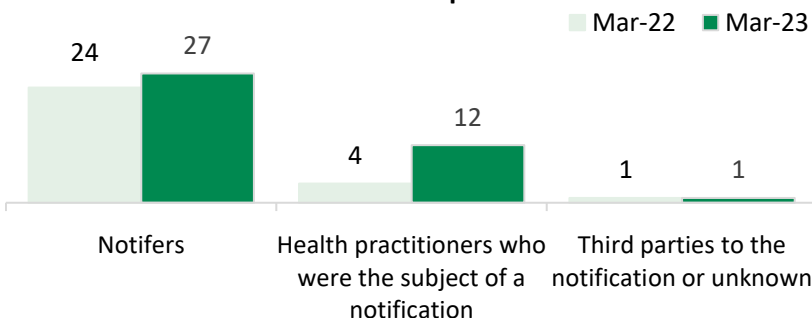
40

notification-related complaints received

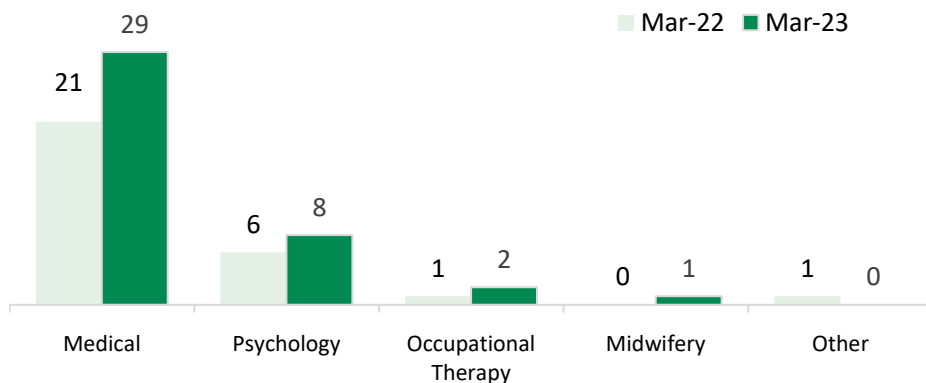


Up from 29 in March 2022

Who made notification-related complaints



Professions notification-related complaints were about



Type of notifications action that most frequently drove notification-related complaints

1. Active notification
2. No further action taken at the assessment stage
3. No further action taken where stage is unknown
4. Action and stage are not yet known
5. Action taken at the investigation stage

Stage notification-related complaints were finalised

18 assessment 14 early resolution transfer
10 preliminary inquiry 4 investigation

Most common outcomes of notification-related complaints

1. The organisation's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable
2. Matter complained about was still active with the organisation
3. Investigation was not warranted in the circumstances
4. Complaint was about the merits of the organisation's decision
5. The complainant did not provide requested information to the NHPO

Registration-related complaints to the Ombudsman

1 March 2023 to 31 March 2023



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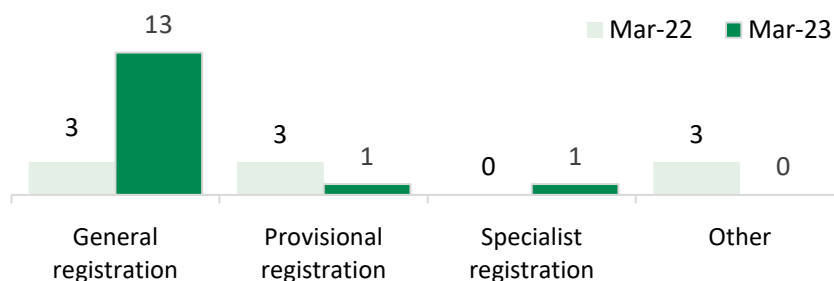
16

registration-related
complaints received

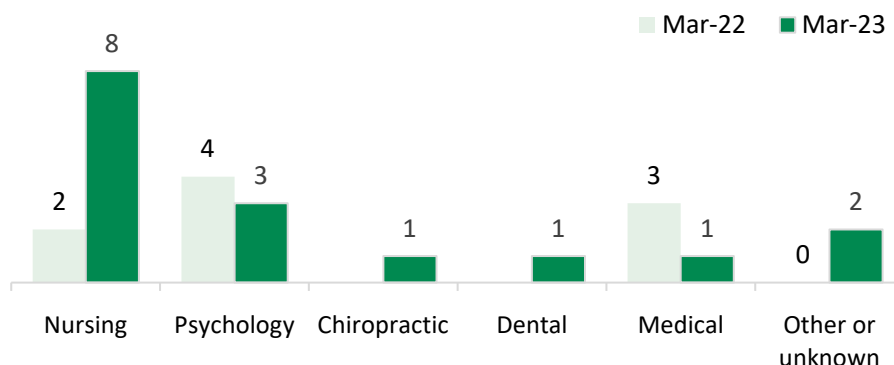


Up from 9 in March 2022

Types of registration driving registration-related complaints



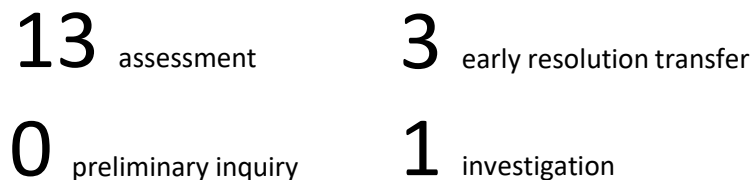
Professions registration-related complaints were about



Registration processes that most frequently drove registration-related complaints

1. Application of the English Language Skills Registration Standard
2. Processing of a new application for registration
3. Review of conditions attached to a practitioner's registration
4. Assessment of an international qualification
5. Third party unable to access their preferred practitioner due to registration issue

Stage registration-related complaints were finalised



Most common outcomes of registration-related complaints

1. Investigation not warranted by the circumstances
2. The organisation's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable
3. Complainant did not provide requested information to the NHPO
4. Complaint related to merits of the organisation's decision
5. Complaint was resolved via mutual agreement between the organisation and the complainant

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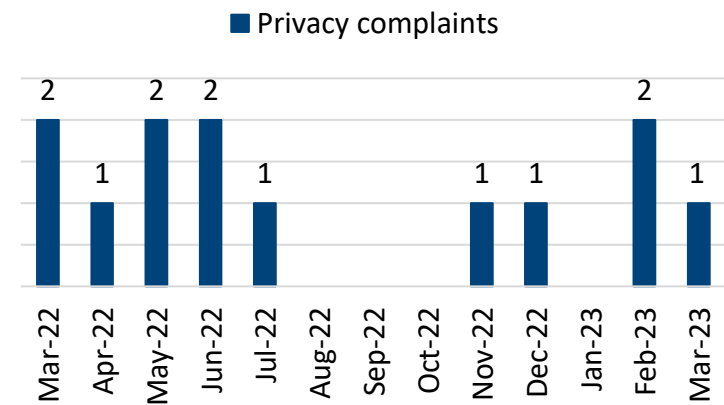
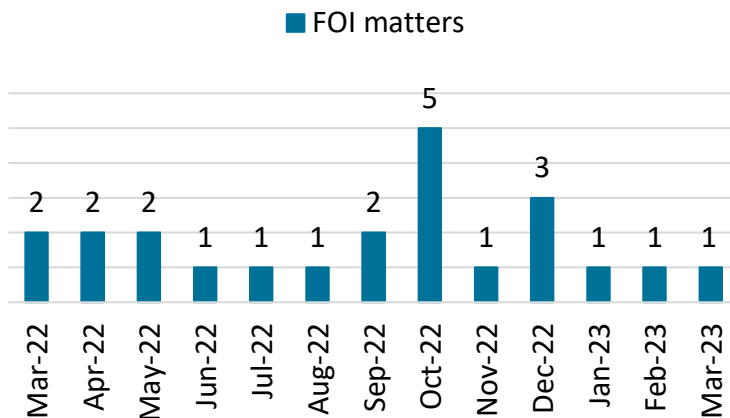
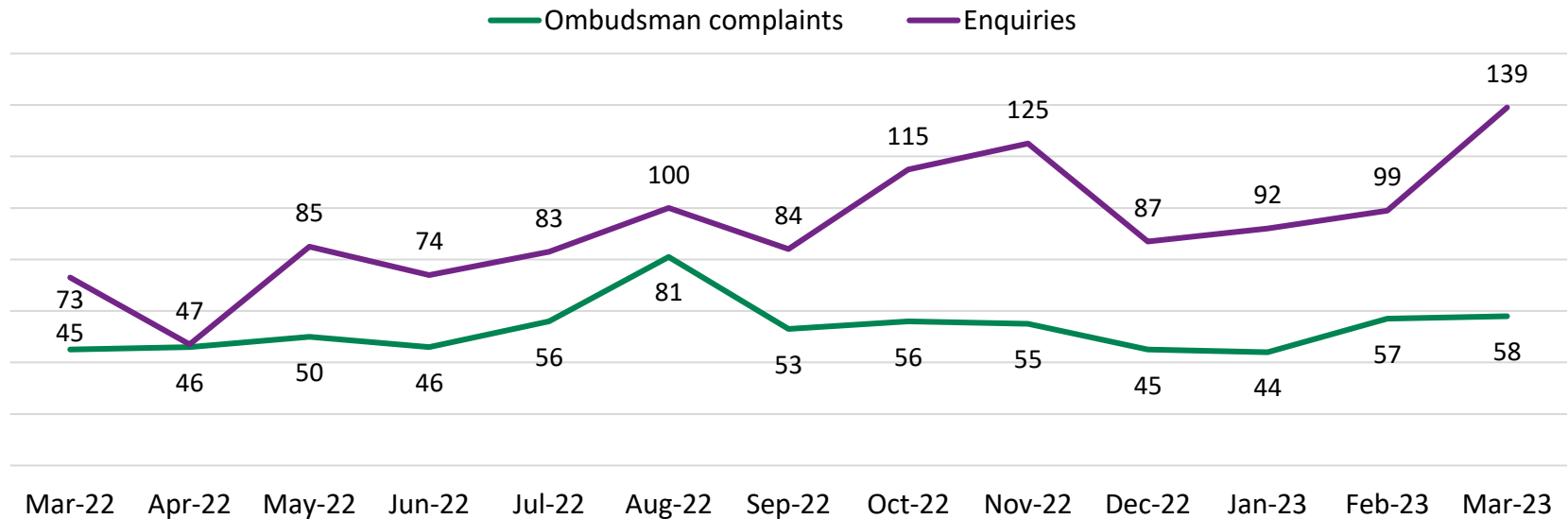
National Health
Practitioner
Ombudsman

Our year to date

1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023

Approach trends

1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023



Ombudsman complaints received from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023

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Types of complaints received

324 ↑ notification
Up from 238 in the same period last financial year

125 ↑ registration
Up from 103 in the same period last financial year

12 Pandemic policy/ response
44 Other types

Who made complaints

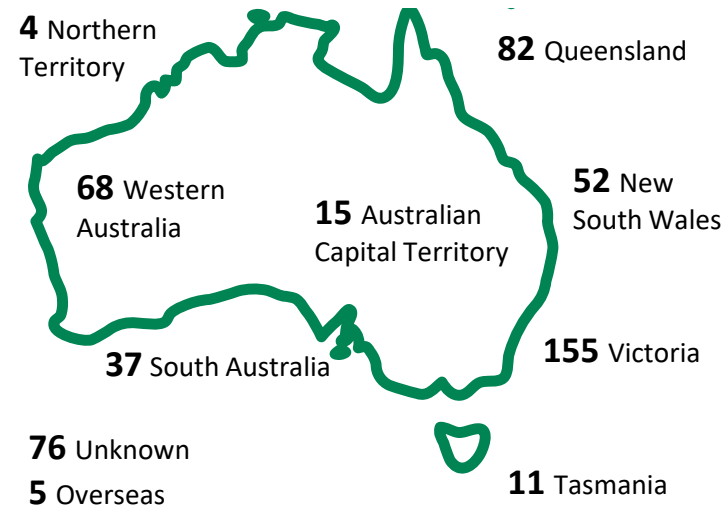
285 health practitioners
220 Non-practitioners

↑ Up from 218 in the same period last financial year
↓ Down from 465 in the same period last financial year

Professions most complaints were about

279 medical (Down from 501 in the same period last financial year)
66 Nursing (Up from 52 in the same period last financial year)
61 psychology (Up from 43 in the same period last financial year)

Location the complaints were made from



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 process for meeting the English Language Skills Registration Standard is unfair

Resolution of Ombudsman complaints from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023

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Early resolution mechanisms

311 

complaints
finalised at the
assessment stage

Down from
507 in the
same period
last financial
year



74 

complaints finalised
at the preliminary
inquiry stage

Down from
76 in the
same period
last financial
year



100 

complaints finalised
at the early resolution
transfer stage

Up from 77
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. The organisation's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable
3. Matter was still active with the organisation
4. Complainant did not provide requested information
5. Investigation declined because the complaint was about the merits of the organisation's decision

Investigations

24 

complaints
finalised at the
investigation stage



Down from 87 in the same
period last financial year

Most common investigation outcomes

1. We provided feedback to the organisation
2. We provided a further explanation to the complainant
3. The organisation agreed to assess new material
4. Apology or acknowledgement was provided by the organisation
5. We facilitated contact between the complainant and organisation

Ombudsman and Commissioner's observations

March 2023 was one of our busiest months on record, with 199 approaches received. This is a 63 per cent increase in approaches compared with the same time last year.

Much of the growth we experienced during March 2023 was due to receiving a large number of enquiries. We received 40 per cent more enquiries during March 2023 than we did in February 2023, and 90 per cent more than at the same time last year. Of the enquiries we received, 66 per cent resulted in us referring the person to Ahpra or to a health complaints entity to raise concerns about a health practitioner or a health service.

In March 2023 Ombudsman complaint levels were similar to what they were in February 2023, but were 29 per cent more higher than they were a year ago. Although the reduction in complaints relating to the COVID-19 pandemic creates an initial impression that we have received fewer complaints to the Ombudsman, notification-related complaints this year to date have increased by 36 per cent since last year. Similarly, registration-related complaints to the Ombudsman are 21 per cent higher.

Health practitioners continue to raise concerns with my office in unprecedented numbers. Complaints from health practitioners have increased by 31 per cent compared with the same period last year, accounting for 56 per cent of all Ombudsman complaints received so far this financial year.

Despite being a busy month, my team continued to deliver an efficient and effective complaint-handling service to health practitioners and the public. We initiated 24 early resolution transfers, which is significantly more than the number of transfers made both last month (15) and in March 2023 (7). We closed 74 per cent more Ombudsman complaints than we did in February 2023, with 92 per cent of those closures achieved via early resolution techniques. We also finalised five investigations. Four of these investigations resulted in Ahpra agreeing to assess new material about a notification and one matter involved my office providing informal feedback to Ahpra about the timely management of registration applications.