



National Health  
Practitioner  
Ombudsman

# Bi-annual performance report

1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

# Ombudsman's message

I am pleased to present my office's bi-annual performance report for 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024.

My office has experienced a busy first half of 2024–25, with a 27% increase in the number of enquiries received (1,118, up from 879 during the same period in 2023–24). We have continued to focus on delivering high-quality complaint handling services while managing the significant increase in the number of complaints received (490 Ombudsman complaints, up from 311 during the same period in 2023–24). One of the most common outcomes of my office's investigations has been providing the organisation being complained about with feedback, generally in relation to areas for improvement. Our involvement can help explain decisions, resolve complaints, and lead to better policies and processes.

My office also continued its work to make positive systemic improvements in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, including through:

- publishing my independent review into the implementation of Ahpra's framework for identifying and dealing with vexatious notifications made about health practitioners. The review's report was endorsed by the Health Chief Executives Forum and all recommendations were accepted by Ahpra.
- progressing my own motion investigation into delay and procedural safeguards for practitioners who are subject to immediate action, with public consultation due to begin in early 2025
- continuing my office's review of Ahpra's compliance with the Information Publication Scheme.

Recently, I attended a conference where a practitioner shared with a room of colleagues how important it was to them, and other overseas qualified practitioners, that my office had recognised racism and discrimination can occur in decision-making processes. This practitioner's reflections help to amplify the importance of my office providing an independent and impartial complaint-handling service that is open and accessible to all. Throughout last year, we continued to raise awareness about how we can assist overseas qualified practitioners, with a particular focus on the growing number of complaints about assessment processes.

I look forward to continuing to work together to improve the regulation of Australia's health practitioners.

# Bi-annual progress report overview

1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024



National Health  
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1,118

approaches  
received



Up from 879 in July  
to December 2023



490

Ombudsman  
complaints received



Up from 311 in July to  
December 2023



13

FOI matters  
received



Down from 18 in July  
to December 2023



9

privacy  
complaints received



Up from 6 in July to  
December 2023



604

enquiries  
received



Up from 539 in July  
to December 2023

14,471

new website  
users



4

FOI review  
determinations



2

notifiable  
data breaches  
assessed

## Complaints to the Ombudsman

67

early resolution  
transfers made



Down from  
103 in July to  
December 2023



69

preliminary  
inquiries made



Down from  
87 in July to  
December 2023



11

investigations  
launched



Up from  
4 in July to  
December 2023



1

own motion  
investigation  
commenced



Recommendations from the *Review of Ahpra's framework for identifying and managing vexatious notifications* accepted and a plan for implementation shared

Submissions made on important issues, including:

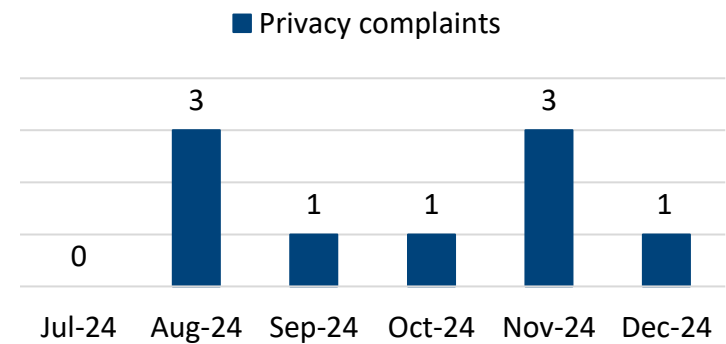
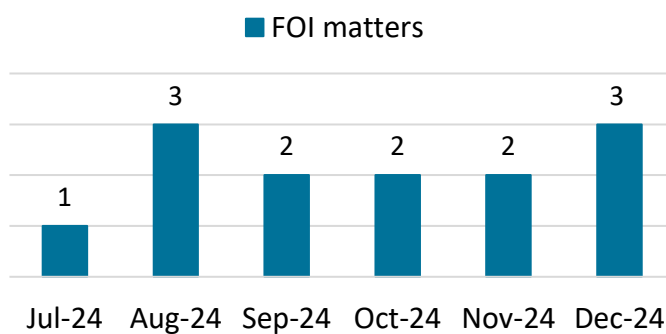
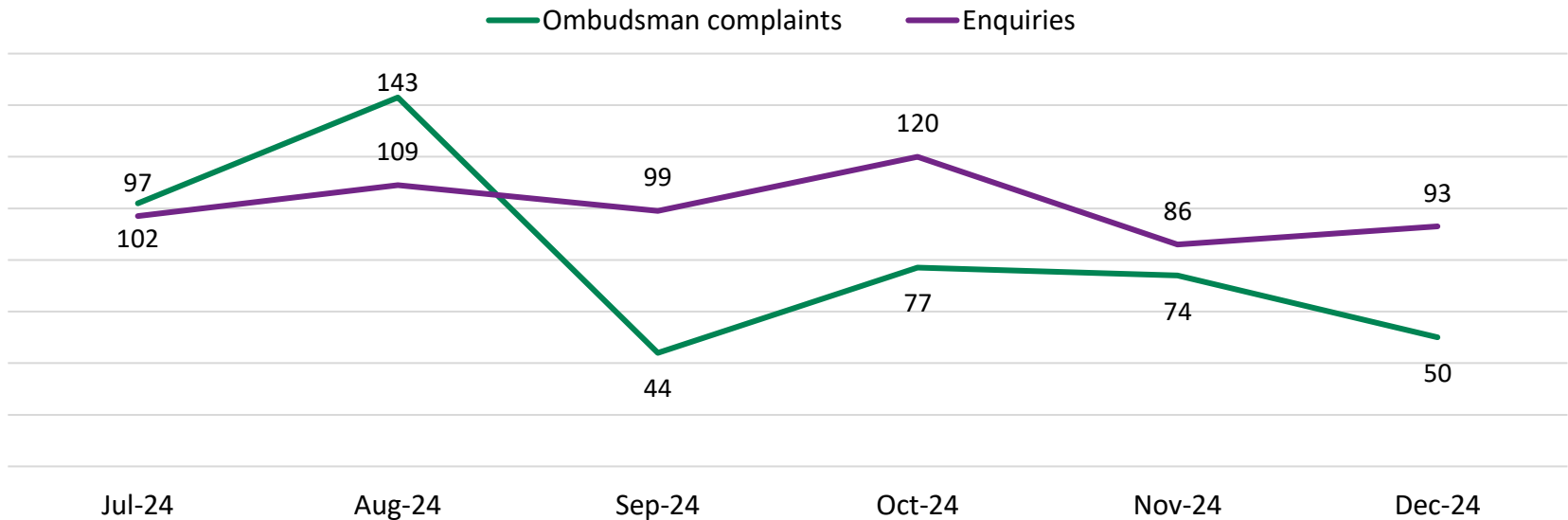
- the consultation on Sue Dawson's Review of complexity in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
- the Accreditation Committee's draft guidance on developing professional capabilities.

# Approach trends

1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024



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# Ombudsman complaints received from 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

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## Types of complaints received

**283** ↑ Up from 197 in the same period last financial year

Notification-related

**139** ↑ Up from 55 in the same period last financial year

Registration-related

**42** ↑ Up from 27 in the same period last financial year

Accreditation-related

## Who made complaints

**321** health practitioners

**179** Non-practitioners

↑ Up from 173 in the same period last financial year

↑ Up from 138 in the same period last financial year

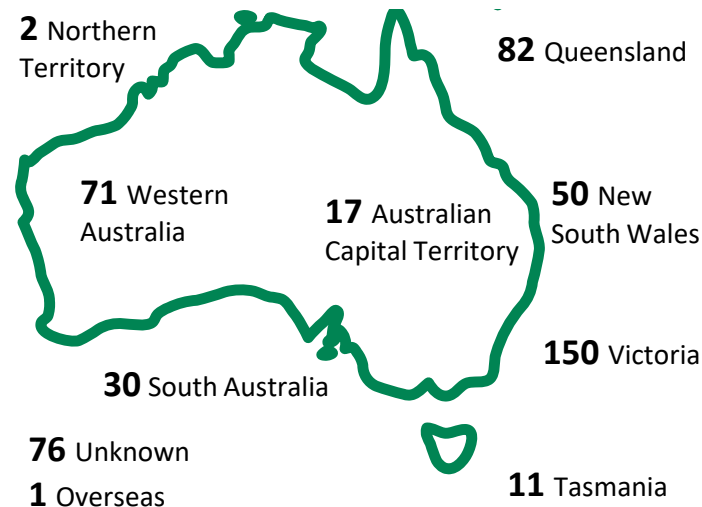
## Professions most complaints were about

**326** medical ↑ Up from 200 in the same period last financial year

**65** nursing ↑ Up from 40 in the same period last financial year

**34** psychology ↑ Up from 21 in the same period last financial year

## Location the complaints were made from



## Most common notification-related issues that drove complaints

1. Notifier believes a decision to take no further action at the assessment stage was unfair or unreasonable
2. Notifier believes inadequate steps were taken before a decision to take no further action was made at the assessment stage
3. Third party to a notification believes a decision to take immediate action against a practitioner is unreasonable

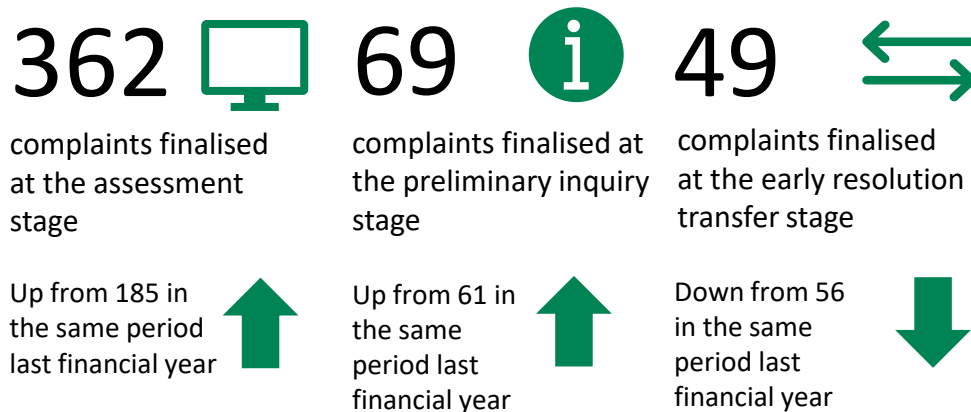
## Most common registration-related issues that drove complaints

1. Practitioner believes the fees they were charged for general registration are unfair or unreasonable
2. Member of the public believes that they or their community are without adequate access to a preferred health practitioner as a result of a practitioner's registration being restricted
3. Practitioner with general registration believes a decision made about an application for a review of restrictions on their registration is unfair or unreasonable

# Resolution of Ombudsman complaints from 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

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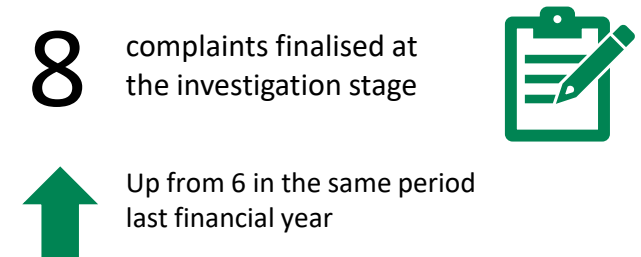
## Early resolution mechanisms



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

1. An investigation was not warranted in the circumstances
2. The complaint concerned the merits of the organisation's decision and we do not have the power to review the merits of a decision
3. The matter complained about was still being actively considered by the organisation
4. The complaint could not be progressed because the complainant did not provide information that our office had requested
5. The organisation's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable

## Investigations



### Most common investigation outcomes

1. Our office provided feedback to the organisation complained about
2. Our office provided the complainant with a further explanation
3. The organisation agreed to change a policy or process
4. The organisation provided the complainant with an apology or acknowledgement
5. Changes were made to the organisation's previous decision or reasons for decision

# Bi-annual progress report highlights

## Review of Ahpra's framework for identifying and managing vexatious notifications

In December 2024 the Ombudsman published her report: Review of Ahpra's Framework for identifying and managing vexatious notifications. The report outlines 17 recommendations to improve the framework and its application, and to strengthen how Ahpra manages notifications in cases involving domestic and family violence allegations and unreasonably persistent notifiers.

The recommendations seek to ensure the notifications process remains open and accessible, while also ensuring health practitioners are treated fairly and better protected from groundless notifications that have been made with the intent to cause harm.

The Ombudsman welcomed:

- Health Ministers' endorsement of the report and recommendations
- Ahpra's acceptance of the review's recommendations and its development of a plan for implementation.

## Responding to increased demand for the NHPO's services

The NHPO was significantly busier during the first half of 2024–25 than the same period in the previous financial year. The office has seen a 27% increase in the number of approaches received when compared with the first half of 2023–24 (1,118 approaches, up from 879).

This increase can mostly be attributed to an increase in Ombudsman complaints (490, up from 311). The office recorded increases across the main types of complaints including those related to the handling of a notification (283, up from 197), registration matter (139, up from 55) and accreditation process (42, up from 27).

Despite the increased demand for the NHPO's services, the office has kept pace and finalised 488 Ombudsman complaints during the first half of 2024–25. The office continues to consistently adhere to its service standards, with 95% of Ombudsman complaints finalised within 90 days or less of receipt.

## Increasing awareness about how we can assist with complaints about specialist medical colleges and overseas qualified practitioner assessments

The NHPO is committed to ensuring that its services are available and accessible to those who need them.

As part of these efforts, the NHPO is raising awareness about its role and how it can help. In December, the office finalised a video series which provide more information about the NHPO's newer services, including assisting with complaints about the assessment of overseas qualified practitioners and the delivery of accredited specialist medical training programs. The videos have been shared on the office's [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) pages and [Vimeo](#) account. Further information was also added to the office's website.

The next phase of the campaign will involve providing resources to assist organisations, including those the NHPO oversees, to proactively share information about how the NHPO's services can be accessed.