

Office of the Health Ombudsman

Performance report April 2016



Office of the
**HEALTH
OMBUDSMAN**

Listen. Respond. Resolve.

Office of the Health Ombudsman—Performance report April 2016

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Introduction

This document contains our performance data for April 2016. Over time, our monthly data will identify trends which will inform our work in promoting improved health service delivery by health service providers, and in identifying systemic issues. As we continue to monitor our performance data, we will also look for areas of improvement, innovation and greater efficiency.

Importantly, our monthly performance reporting highlights our commitment to transparency and accountability, and our desire to ensure Queenslanders have confidence in the management of health service complaints.

The Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) commenced operation on 1 July 2014 as Queensland's health service complaints management agency. On commencement, the OHO not only started receiving enquiries and health service complaints, but assumed responsibility for 289 matters previously managed by the Health Quality and Complaints Commission. All matters transitioned from the commission that have been reviewed, audited and processed within the OHO's health service complaints management system are integrated within this data.

In addition, during August 2014, the OHO began reviewing current matters from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the national boards to determine those that were most appropriately dealt with by the OHO, and those that should continue to be dealt with by AHPRA. The OHO took on this existing work in conjunction with the notification (after 1 July) of new serious matters by AHPRA to the OHO for determination and action, as appropriate. These matters are included within the data of this report.

Data in this report is correct as at 11 May 2016, but is subject to change.

Number of contacts

Type of contact	Number	Percentage
Complaint	525	62.35
Enquiry	294	34.92
Yet to be classified	23	2.73
Total	842	100.00

This data is based on contacts with the OHO during the month. Matters that are 'yet to be classified' are contacts in which not enough information was provided initially to allow for a determination and additional information is being sought, or are matters that came in just before the end of the reporting period and were still being processed.

The number of complaint contacts will not equal the number of decisions made in the table below.

Contacts 'yet to be classified' at the time of running this report will continue to be allocated as complaints (and enquiries) as additional information is received. However, decisions on these complaints will be registered in the next reporting period.

Type of complaints

Type of complaints	Number	Percentage
Health consumer complaint	444	84.57
Mandatory notification*	59	11.24
Voluntary notification*	13	2.48
Self-notification*	3	0.57
Referral**	6	1.14
Total	525	100.00

*Notifications are made by health service providers, as required in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Queensland).

**Referrals are matters referred by government and non-government agencies to the OHO.

Decisions

Number of decisions made

Number of decisions made	Number	Percentage
Accepted	283	47.12
Not accepted	141	23.50
Decision pending	176	29.34
Total	600	100.00

'Decision pending' relates to matters where more information is required before deciding whether to accept or not accept a complaint, or because a matter came in just before the end of the reporting period and is still to be processed.

Decisions made within seven days

April had the fourth highest number of decisions made since 1 July 2014. Despite this, there were fewer decisions made in April (424) than March (460) and February (494).

There continues to be a high number of complaints received each month. The average number of monthly complaints received for the period 1 January to 30 April in 2016 was 434. This is an increase of 52 per cent over the same period last year (285). While this result is pleasing, work is continuing on upskilling staff and reviewing processes to maximise productivity improvements.

Decision made within seven days of receiving a complaint	Number	Percentage
Yes	196	46.23
No	228	53.77
Total	424	100.00

Health service complaints profile

Main issues raised in complaints

Issue	Number	Percentage
Access	5	1.28
Code of conduct for healthcare workers	0	0.00
Communication/information	64	16.41
Consent	3	0.77
Discharge/transfer arrangements	18	4.62
Environment/management of facilities	13	3.33
Enquiry service	0	0.00
Fees/cost	2	0.51
Grievance processes	8	2.05
Medical records	14	3.59
Medication	24	6.15
Professional conduct	36	9.23
Professional health	3	0.77
Professional performance	198	50.77
Reports/certificates	2	0.51
Total	390	100.00

These figures are based on complaints that completed the assessment process during the month. Basing figures on completed assessments produces accurate reporting of the type(s) of issues identified as all relevant details of a matter have been identified at the time an assessment is completed. Please note, there can be multiple issues identified within a single complaint.

Number and type of complaints by health practitioner

Practitioner type	Access	Code of conduct for healthcare workers	Communication and information	Consent	Discharge/transfer arrangements	Environment/management of facility	Enquiry service	Fees and costs	Grievance process	Medical records	Medication	Professional conduct	Professional health	Professional performance	Reports/certificates	Treatment	Total
Alternative care	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinese medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chiropractor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	5	-	-	8
Emergency care	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
General medical	-	-	17	1	1	3	-	-	-	2	9	6	1	32	1	-	73
Medical radiation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Medical specialty	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	17
Nursing	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	12	1	6	-	-	26
Occupational therapy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Optometry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Osteopathy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Other	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	1	1	-	12
Pathology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pharmacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	8
Physiotherapy	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	10
Podiatry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Psychology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3
Speech pathology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Surgical	1	-	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	25	-	-	35
Not yet known	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Total	1	-	33	3	3	3	-	1	2	6	15	32	3	98	2	-	202

These figures are based on complaints that completed the assessment process during the month. Basing figures on completed assessments produces accurate reporting of the type(s) of issues identified as all relevant details of a matter have been identified at the time an assessment is completed. Please note, there can be multiple issues identified within a single complaint.

Number and type of complaints by health service organisation

Organisation type	Access	Code of conduct for healthcare workers	Communication and information	Consent	Discharge/transfer arrangements	Environment/management of facility	Enquiry service	Fees and costs	Grievance process	Medical records	Medication	Professional conduct	Professional health	Professional performance	Reports/certificates	Treatment	Total
Aged care facility	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	5
Allied health service	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Ambulance service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community health service	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Correctional facility	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Dental service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Health service district	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Laboratory service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Licensed day hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Licensed private hospital	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	3	-	-	8
Medical centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Mental health service	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Nursing service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other government department	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other support service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pharmaceutical service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Public health service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public hospital	4	-	29	-	12	6	-	-	4	5	5	1	-	88	-	-	154
Residential care service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Specialised health service	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	6
Not yet known	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	4	-	31	-	15	10	-	1	6	8	9	4	-	100	-	-	188

These figures are based on complaints that completed the assessment process during the month. Basing figures on completed assessments produces accurate reporting of the type(s) of issues identified as all relevant details of a matter have been identified at the time an assessment is completed. Please note, there can be multiple issues identified within a single complaint.

Assessment

Assessments started and completed

Assessments this month	Number
Assessments started	110
Assessments completed	207

Completed assessment timeframes

A total of 207 assessments were completed in April, including 126 matters which had been in assessment for a period of more than 60 days.

Fewer assessments were started in April (110) compared with previous months. This directly correlates with relatively low 'complaints accepted' for the month (based on the year-to-date monthly average). It also reflects recent changes allowing serious matters to be referred directly for immediate action or investigation, rather than for assessment. This process improvement enables serious matters to be identified and addressed within shorter timeframes.

Assessment timeframes	Number	Percentage
Completed within 30 days	39	19.02
Completed within 60 days*	42	20.00
Completed in more than 60 days	126	60.98
Total	207	100.00

*Assessments are able to be completed within 60 days when granted an extension of 30 days as a result of legislated requirements being met. Of the 42 assessments completed within 60 days, 38 were granted extensions.

Assessment decisions

Type of relevant action	Number	Percentage
Local resolution	8	3.81
Conciliation	7	3.33
Investigation	6	2.86
Referred to AHPRA and the national boards	87	41.43
Referral to another entity	26	12.38
Immediate registration action*	2	0.95
Interim prohibition order*	0	0.00
No further action	74	35.24
Total	210	100.00

Total assessment decisions will not equal the total number of assessments (in previous tables) as a single assessment can result in multiple relevant actions.

The figures for the type of relevant action decided in the assessment stage may not correspond with totals for respective relevant actions (e.g. local resolution, conciliation, investigation etc.) due to the time between a decision being made and an action being taken crossing over different reporting periods.

*Immediate action assessment decision figures may not align with the immediate action figures later in the report due to immediate action decisions being made outside of the assessment process.

Local resolution

Local resolutions started and completed

Local resolutions this month	Number
Local resolutions started	72
Local resolutions completed	110

The number of local resolutions started in the month may not directly match the number of assessment decisions to undertake local resolution due to the time between a decision being made and an action taken crossing over different reporting periods.

Completed local resolution timeframes

A total of 21 local resolution matters were completed within 60 days, of which 6 were eligible for and received an approved extension. The remaining 15 matters completed within 60 days were finalised without an extension due to various factors including the ongoing challenges in processing the higher volumes of complaints in the preceding months, delays in sourcing information and contacting parties, and unexpected leave impacts.

Local resolution timeframes	Number	Percentage
Completed within 30 days	87	79.09
Completed within 60 days*	21	19.09
Completed in more than 60 days**	2	1.82
Total	110	100.00

*Local resolutions are able to be completed within 60 days when granted an extension of 30 days as a result of legislated requirements being met.

**Two matters were completed in more than 60 days due to the ongoing challenges in processing the increased workloads arising from high volumes in the preceding months.

Local resolution outcomes

Local resolution outcomes	Number	Percentage
Resolved	91	82.73
Not resolved	19	17.27
Complaint withdrawn*	0	0.00
Total	110	100.00

*Complainants can choose to withdraw their complaint at any stage during local resolution.

Decisions for matters that were not resolved

Type of relevant action	Number	Percentage
Conciliation	0	0.00
Investigation	0	0.00
Referred to AHPRA and the national boards	0	0.00
Referral to another entity	0	0.00
Immediate action	0	0.00
No further action	19	100.00
Total	19	100.00

Conciliation

Conciliations started and closed

Conciliations this month	Number
Conciliations open at the start of the month	45
Conciliations started	7
Conciliations closed	1

The number of conciliations started in the reporting period may not match the number of assessment decisions to undertake conciliation due to the time between a decision being made and an action taken crossing over different reporting periods.

'Conciliations started' includes all matters—including matters where agreement to participate has or has not been reached or the decision is pending—that entered the conciliation workflow during the reporting period following the OHO assessing them as being suitable for conciliation. Similarly, 'conciliations closed' are all matters that were closed during the reporting period, whether due to parties not agreeing to participate or the matter being closed after completing the conciliation process. Closed conciliations differ from completed conciliations below, as completed conciliations only include matters where both parties agreed to participate and the conciliation process was completed.

Agreement to participate in conciliation

Agreement to participate in conciliation	Number
Party/ies agreed to conciliation	1
Party/ies did not agree to conciliation*	1
Decision pending at end of month	11

*This relates to the 'conciliations closed' matter in the previous table.

Once the decision is made to attempt conciliation, both parties must agree to participate in the process. If either one, or both, of the parties do not agree, the conciliation process does not commence and the matter is closed.

Decisions pending includes matters where parties are still deciding whether to participate in conciliation at the end of the reporting period. It also includes matters that have been referred to another relevant action, where conciliation may not commence until this relevant action has been finalised.

Completed conciliation timeframes

Conciliations completed	Number	Percentage
Less than 3 months	0	0.00
3–6 months	0	0.00
6–9 months	0	0.00
9–12 months	0	0.00
More than 12 months	0	0.00
Total	0	0.00

The data above relates to matters where parties agreed to participate in conciliation and the conciliation process was completed within the specified timeframes. Completed conciliations differ from closed conciliations (in the table above) as they only relate to matters where parties agreed to participate and the conciliation process was completed.

Completed conciliation outcomes

Conciliation outcomes	Number	Percentage
Successful	0	0.00
Not successful	0	0.00
Ended by Health Ombudsman	0	0.00
Total	0	0.00

The data above relates to matters where parties agreed to participate in conciliation. After agreeing, the conciliation process was completed with the matter either being successful or not successful—or in rare instances, the Health Ombudsman ending it. Completed conciliations differ from closed conciliations—in the first conciliation data table above—as completed conciliations only relate to matters where parties agreed to participate and the conciliation process was completed.

Decisions for conciliations that were not successful

Type of relevant action	Number	Percentage
Local resolution	0	0.00
Investigation	0	0.00
Referred to AHPRA and the national boards	0	0.00
Referral to another entity	0	0.00
Immediate action	0	0.00
No further action	0	0.00
Total	0	0.00

Open conciliation timeframes

Conciliations open	Number	Percentage
Less than 3 months	30	58.82
3–6 months	16	31.37
6–9 months	3	5.88
9–12 months	1	1.96
More than 12 months	1	1.96
Total	51	100.00

Matters can be referred simultaneously to conciliation and another relevant action. Conciliation may not commence until after the other relevant action has been finalised.

There are currently 11 matters on hold pending the outcome of another process (e.g. the process of another agency such as AHPRA). These 11 matters include two that have been open less than 3 months, four that have been open between 3 and 6 months, three that have been open between 6 and 9 months, one that has been open between 9 and 12 months and one that has been open for more than 12 months.

Investigation

Investigations started and closed

Investigations this month	Number
Investigations open at the beginning of the month	338
Investigations started	29
Investigations closed	10
Investigations paused*	10
Investigations re-commenced**	3

The number of investigations started in the reporting period may not match the number of assessment decisions to undertake investigation due to the time between a decision being made and an action taken crossing over different reporting periods, or due to investigations being started via other processes (e.g. own-motion investigation).

*Certain matters may be referred to an external agency, such as the Queensland Police Service while criminal proceedings take place, or to the coroner if it relates to reportable deaths (under s92 of the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*). From an OHO perspective, these matters are not closed but effectively paused within the OHO's complaints management system as in these circumstances it is not appropriate for the OHO to conduct any investigations that may impede on an external agency's processes. As a result, investigation of these matters will be put on hold until the external agency finalises its processes.

**These are matters that have been re-commenced by the OHO following an external agency completing their processes.

Closed investigation timeframes

Investigations closed	Number	Percentage
Less than 3 months	0	0.00
3–6 months	3	30.00
6–9 months	0	0.00
9–12 months	0	0.00
More than 12 months	7	70.00
Total	10	100.00

Closed investigation outcome

Closed investigation outcome	Number
Referred to Director of Proceedings	6
Report	0
Referred to AHPRA	2
Referred to another agency	0
No further action	2

Open investigation timeframes

Investigations open	Number	Percentage
Less than 3 months	39	10.83
3–6 months	31	8.61
6–9 months	33	9.16
9–12 months	41	11.38
More than 12 months*	144	40.00
Paused matters	72	20.00
Total	360	100.00

*All investigations that have been open for more than 12 months are published on the investigations register on the OHO website (www.oho.qld.gov.au).

Open investigation categories

Type of investigation	Number
Health service complaint	285
Systemic issue	2
Another matter*	0

This does not include the 72 paused matters currently with an external agency.

*Matters that are brought to the Health Ombudsman's attention by means other than through a health service complaint or notification.

Immediate action

The Health Ombudsman can take immediate action against both registered and unregistered health practitioners if the Health Ombudsman reasonably believes the practitioner poses a serious risk to the health and safety of the public.

Show cause notices

In April, one show cause notice was issued against a medical practitioner on 28 April 2016.

As outlined in the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*, upon receipt of a show cause notice, a health service provider is invited to make a submission within a stated period of time. The Health Ombudsman will then consider the submission before deciding whether to take immediate action against the provider.

Immediate registration action

No immediate registration action was taken in April.

The Health Ombudsman can take immediate registration action if a registered health practitioner's health, conduct or performance means they pose a serious risk to people and immediate action is necessary to protect public health and safety.

The Health Ombudsman can temporarily suspend or impose conditions on the registration of registered health practitioners.

Prohibition orders

In April, the Health Ombudsman issued two prohibition orders. These related to:

- one unregistered psychologist, acting in the role of a counsellor, for reasons relating to health and conduct
- one unregistered audiologist for reasons relating to conduct and performance.

The details for current prohibition orders can be found on the OHO website (www.oho.qld.gov.au) on the prohibition order register.

The Health Ombudsman can issue an interim prohibition order if an unregistered health practitioner's health, conduct or performance means they pose a serious risk to people and immediate action is necessary to protect public health and safety.

An interim prohibition order can *prohibit* or *restrict* a health practitioner from providing any health service, or a specific health service.

The Health Ombudsman can also enforce a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order issued in another state or territory where that interstate prohibition order corresponds—or substantially corresponds—to the type of prohibition order that can be made in Queensland.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Notifications from AHPRA

The OHO did not receive any new notifications (s193 of the Act) regarding serious matters in April.

Number of practitioners referred to AHPRA by practitioner type

Practitioner type	Number
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health	0
Chinese medicine	2
Chiropractic	1
Dental	13
Medical	119
Medical student	0
Medical radiation	2
Nursing and midwifery	30
Nursing student	0
Occupational therapy	1
Optometry	0
Osteopathy	1
Pharmacy	12
Physiotherapy	2
Podiatry	1
Psychology	7
Unregistered practitioner	0
Total	191

Number of issues referred to AHPRA by practitioner type

Registered practitioner type	Access	Code of conduct for healthcare workers	Communication and information	Consent	Discharge/transfer arrangements	Environment/management of facility	Enquiry service	Fees and costs	Grievance process	Medical records	Medication	Professional conduct	Professional health	Professional performance	Reports/certificates	Treatment	Total
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinese medicine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Chiropractic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Dental	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	15	-	-	3
Medical	-	-	17	9	3	4	-	-	-	4	12	11	7	100	2	-	169
Medical student	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical radiation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	6
Nursing and midwifery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	14	11	4	-	-	32
Nursing student	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Occupational therapy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Optometry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Osteopathy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Pharmacy	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	8	-	2	1	-	-	16
Physiotherapy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Podiatry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Psychology	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	1	-	9
Unregistered practitioner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	19	9	3	4	-	1	-	9	22	36	26	130	3	-	262

The figures above represent the number of issues referred to AHPRA, not the number of practitioners. The referral of a single practitioner may include multiple issues relating to that practitioner, with each issue requiring its own action.

Demographics

The following demographic data is based on matters that have completed the assessment process. Basing figures on completed assessments produces accurate reporting as all relevant details of a matter have been identified.

Unless otherwise specified, data is based on healthcare consumers, not the complainant, as the complainant in a matter may not be the consumer of the health service. Matters where the healthcare consumer is an organisation are not included in these figures.

Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	122	59.80
Male	77	37.75
Unknown	5	2.45
Total	204	100.00

Age

Age	Number	Percentage
Less than 18	9	4.41
18–24 years	11	5.39
25–34 years	26	12.75
35–44 years	39	19.12
45–54 years	34	16.67
55–64 years	32	15.69
65–74 years	19	9.31
More than 75 years	17	8.33
Unknown*	17	8.33

*Not recorded or not provided for a particular matter.

Location of healthcare consumers

Location of healthcare consumers	Number	Percentage
Brisbane	86	42.16
Central West	0	0.00
Darling Downs	10	4.90
Far North	12	5.88
Fitzroy	8	3.92
Gold Coast	37	18.14
Mackay	4	1.96
North West	0	0.00
Northern	9	4.41
South West	0	0.00
Sunshine Coast	11	5.39
West Moreton	5	2.45
Wide Bay–Burnett	8	3.92
Outside Queensland	9	4.41
Unknown	5	2.45

The above data is based on health consumer location.

Location of health service providers

Location of health service providers	Number	Percentage
Brisbane	109	45.04
Central West	0	0.00
Darling Downs	12	4.96
Far North	13	5.37
Fitzroy	8	3.31
Gold Coast	40	16.53
Mackay	4	1.65
North West	4	1.65
Northern	12	4.96
South West	2	0.83
Sunshine Coast	12	4.96
West Moreton	1	0.41
Wide Bay–Burnett	9	3.72
Outside Queensland*	2	0.83
Unknown	14	5.79

The above data is based on health service provider location.

*Health service provider location is taken from the primary address of the provider recorded in the OHO complaints management system. Complaints can be made about health service providers from other states who have provided health services in Queensland. This could include locums travelling to Queensland from interstate or providers who previously lived in Queensland providing services but have since moved interstate—as the OHO can deal with complaints up to two years old.



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