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**OVERSEAS STUDENTS OMBUDSMAN** 

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# Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO)

## COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN

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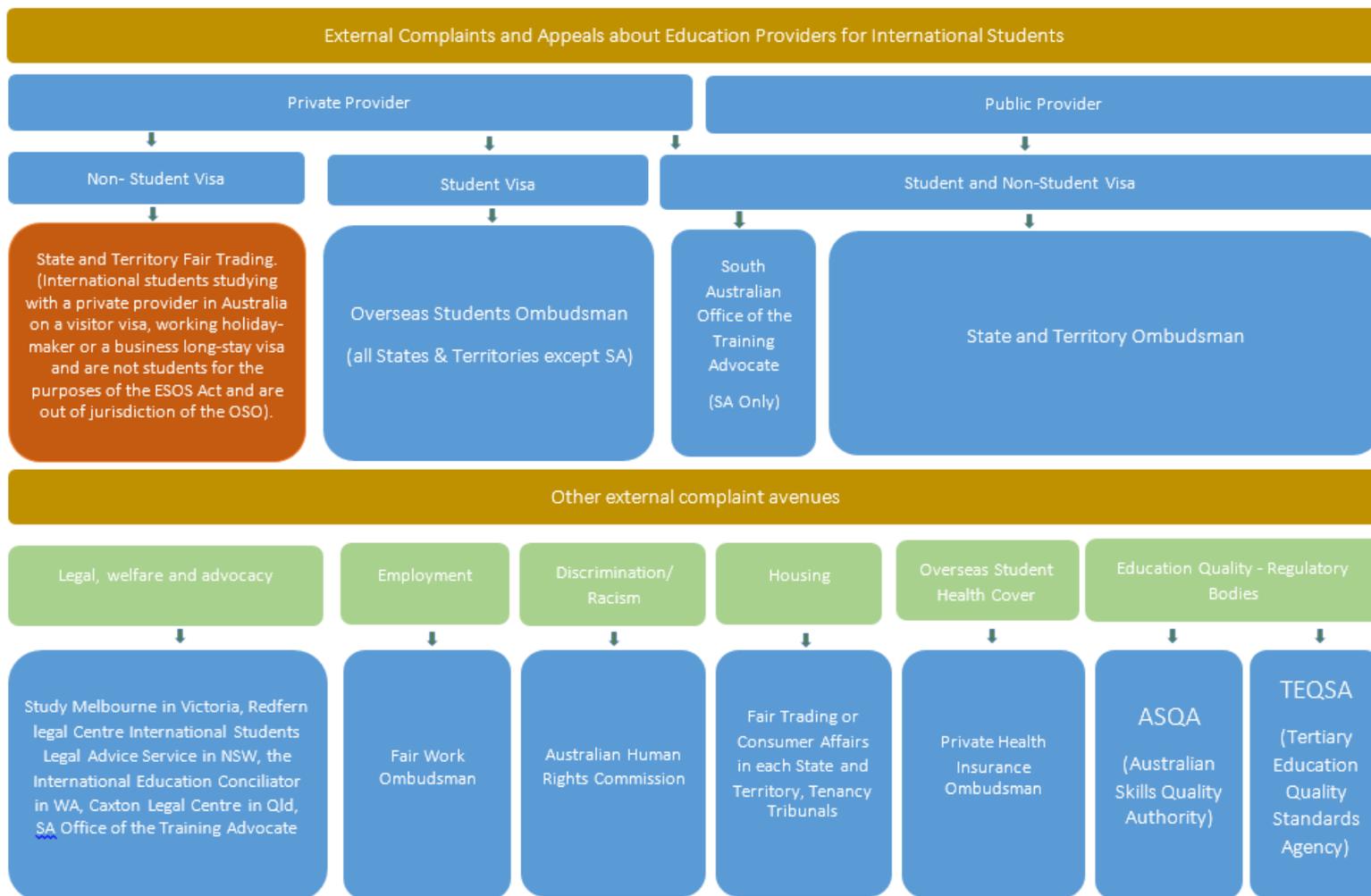
OSO is a specialist function within the Commonwealth Ombudsman office. We:

- [investigate complaints](#) about problems that intending, current or former overseas students have with **private** schools, colleges and universities (education providers) in Australia
- provide information about [best practice complaint-handling](#) to help private education providers manage internal complaints effectively
- [publish reports](#) on problems and broader issues in international education that we identify through our investigations.

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# Current arrangements



# Discussion Paper

- The *National Strategy for International Education 2025* notes that a positive student experience is crucial to the success of the strategy
- International students associations have told us that students are often not aware of what assistance is available and who to contact when they experience issues with their education provider
- We circulated a discussion paper to consult stakeholders about the current external complaint avenues for international students with a complaint about their education provider

# Consultation results - issues

Most stakeholders agreed that:

- The current arrangements can be complex and confusing, and that there are inconsistencies across jurisdictions and gaps in the current external complaint and appeal framework
- There is a need for a specialised complaints' handler familiar with both administrative law, the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (the ESOS Act) and the ESOS legislative framework more generally
- There is also a lack of consistent, sector-wide data about complaints and appeals from international students to reliably inform the government and sector about international students' experience with their education providers in Australia, to inform international education policy developments at both national and State levels.

# Consultation results- options

Consider creating a **single international student ombudsman**, to handle all complaints from international students across Australia whether studying in the private or public sector.

Submissions indicated general support for a single international student Ombudsman

Simplicity, accessibility and national consistency were key reasons cited for the support of this model.

# A single Ombudsman for international students

- Currently, some external complaint handlers do not differentiate complaints from domestic and international students, and are not considering the ESOS requirements when handling complaints from international students
- The OSO considers all international students complaints against the ESOS framework
- Under a single ombudsman, all international student complaints would be assessed against the requirements of the ESOS framework

# Consultation results – other options

- A single intake point i.e. ‘No wrong-door’ for international student complaints to be distributed to the appropriate ombudsman or other complaint handler
- Existing external complaint and appeal bodies could review the information to assist international students to understand which external complaint or appeal body to contact
- All external complaint and appeal bodies increase training for education providers on best practice complaint handling (OSO already provides this)

# Complaints data – issues and options

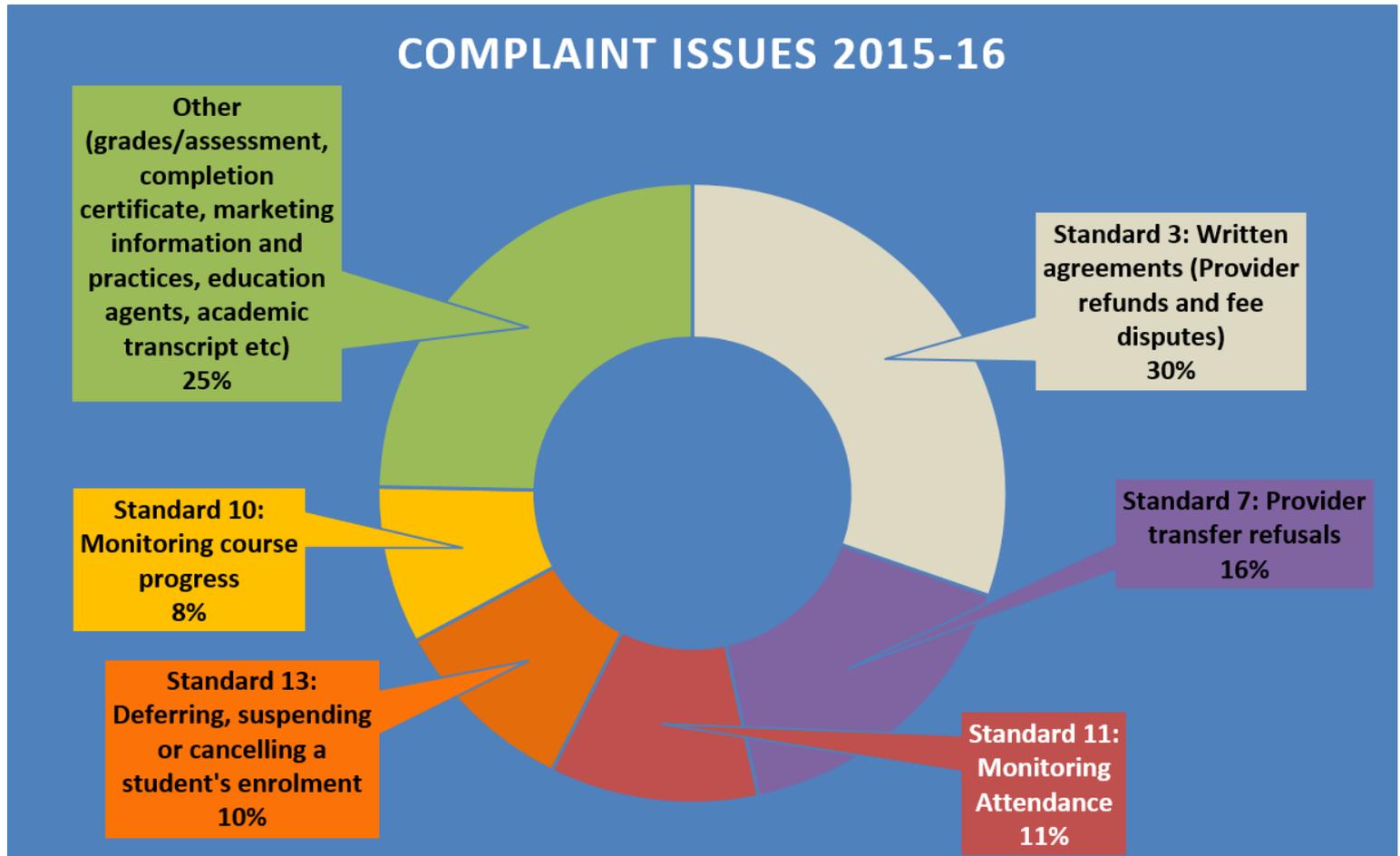
- There is significant lack of consistent, sector-wide data about complaints and appeals from international students to reliably inform the government and sector about international students' experience with their education providers in Australia
- A single ombudsman for all international students would ensure comprehensive and consistent complaint data is available about all international students
- Alternatively, a National Reporting Standard for data relating to complaints from international students about education providers in Australia

# A National Reporting Standard

A National Reporting Standard would facilitate:

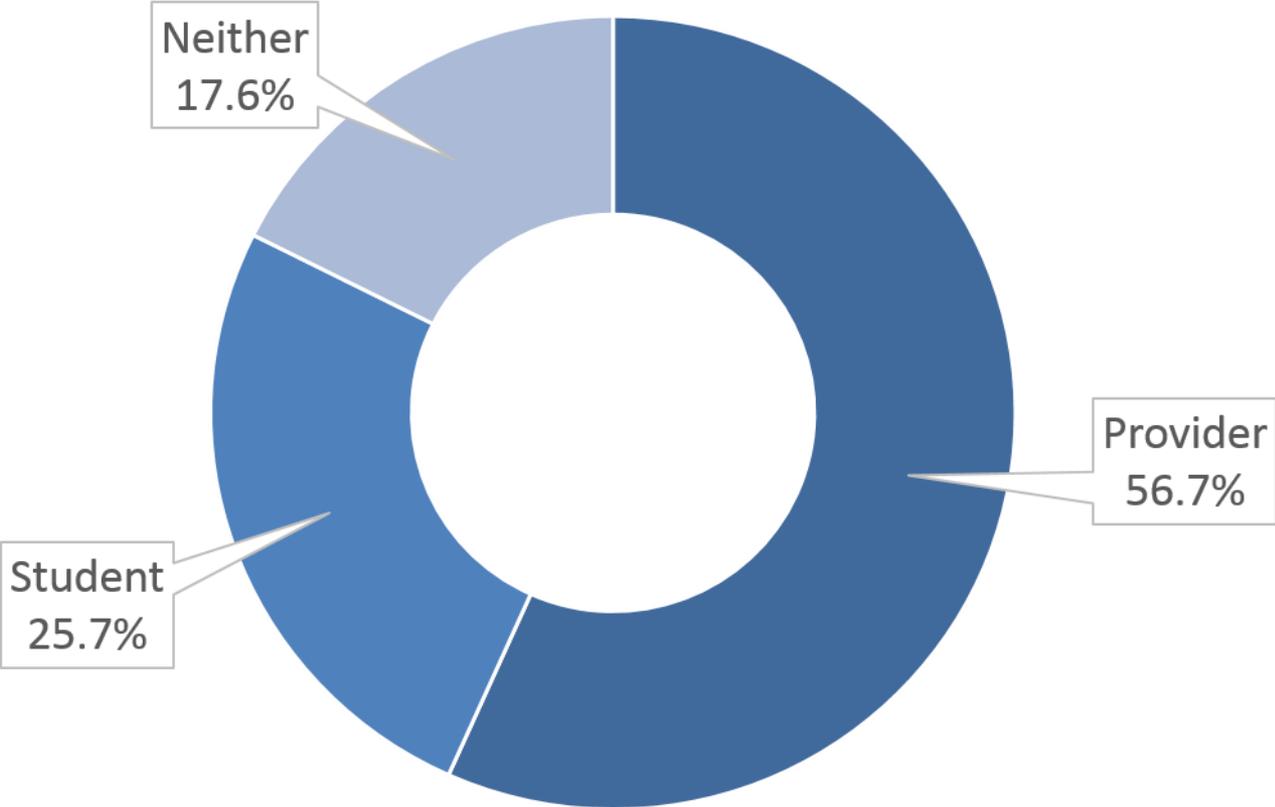
- collation of state & territory data into national figures
- consistency across jurisdictions so that data is meaningfully comparable
- data to gauge issues specific to particular locations
- comparison and assessment of issues affecting students in either the private or public sector
- government analysis to assist evidence-based international education policy developments at national and state levels
- an opportunity to report positive outcomes obtained for international students by external complaint handling bodies
- communicate the work of external complaint handling bodies in supporting Australia's protections for international students.

# Top complaints issues from our data



# Complaint investigation outcomes

Who the outcome supported 2015-16



# Influencing improvements

## Comments, observations and recommendations

- We often provide comments, observations or recommendations to a provider at the conclusion of an investigation which can providers can use to inform changes to policies and procedures
- We analyse our complaints data to identify trends and systemic issues

## Provider Reports

- We analysed complaints data for the education providers we receive the most complaints and appeals about
- The reports show how our recommendations have led to improvements in providers policies and procedures, complaint outcomes over time

# Resources for providers

- Better Practice Complaint Handling for Education Providers
- Complaint Handling at Universities: Australasian Best Practice Guidelines
- Written Agreements Checklist
- Issues Papers
  - Course Progress and Attendance
  - Overseas Students Health Cover
- Reports
  - Quarterly Statistical Reports
  - OSO Education Provider Reports
- e-Newsletters for providers



# What we'd like from you...

- We'd love to hear your feedback about our:
  - Resources
  - Provider Reports
  - Quarterly Statistical Reports
  - Consultation Paper

# Questions?



For more information visit [ombudsman.gov.au](http://ombudsman.gov.au) and select  
Private Education Providers with Overseas Students

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