



# Overseas Students Ombudsman

New CISA Executive training  
7 August 2015





# Role of the OSO

- The OSO **investigates complaints** from intending, current and former overseas students about private education and training providers
- State/Territory Ombudsmen investigate complaints about public providers e.g. Universities, TAFEs, government schools
- SA Training Advocate investigates SA public and private providers and advocates for students



# Investigating complaints

- The Department of Education and Training (DET) sets the rules in the ESOS Act & National Code (student's rights re: their education provider)
- We investigate complaints against those rules
- We help students by resolving their complaints about private providers or by referring them to the right complaints body
- Remedies include: fees refunded, debt waived, release letter granted, student not reported to immigration, better explanation if not in student's favour



# Helping students

- We publish information on what we see from our complaints to help students and providers avoid common problems
- We publish a **student e-newsletter** with tips and info (we rely on CISA to distribute this for us)
- First **student fact sheet** on course progress and attendance to go with issues paper for providers on same topic
- Previously put messages on **CISA's Facebook** page



# Helping education providers

- We **help providers improve** their internal complaints and appeals processes
- We do this through:
  - recommendations on individual complaints
  - better practice complaints handling guide for providers
  - presentations and webinars through EA, ACPET, ISANA, ISC etc.
  - provider e-newsletter
  - issues papers and checklists



# Reporting on trends and issues

- We **report on trends and systemic issues** that we see from the complaints we investigate
- We do this through:
  - issues papers
    - OSHC, Written Agreements, Course Progress & Attendance
  - quarterly and annual reports
  - submissions to government reviews and enquiries
    - ESOS Reforms, Productivity Commission reviews, Senate VET enquiry

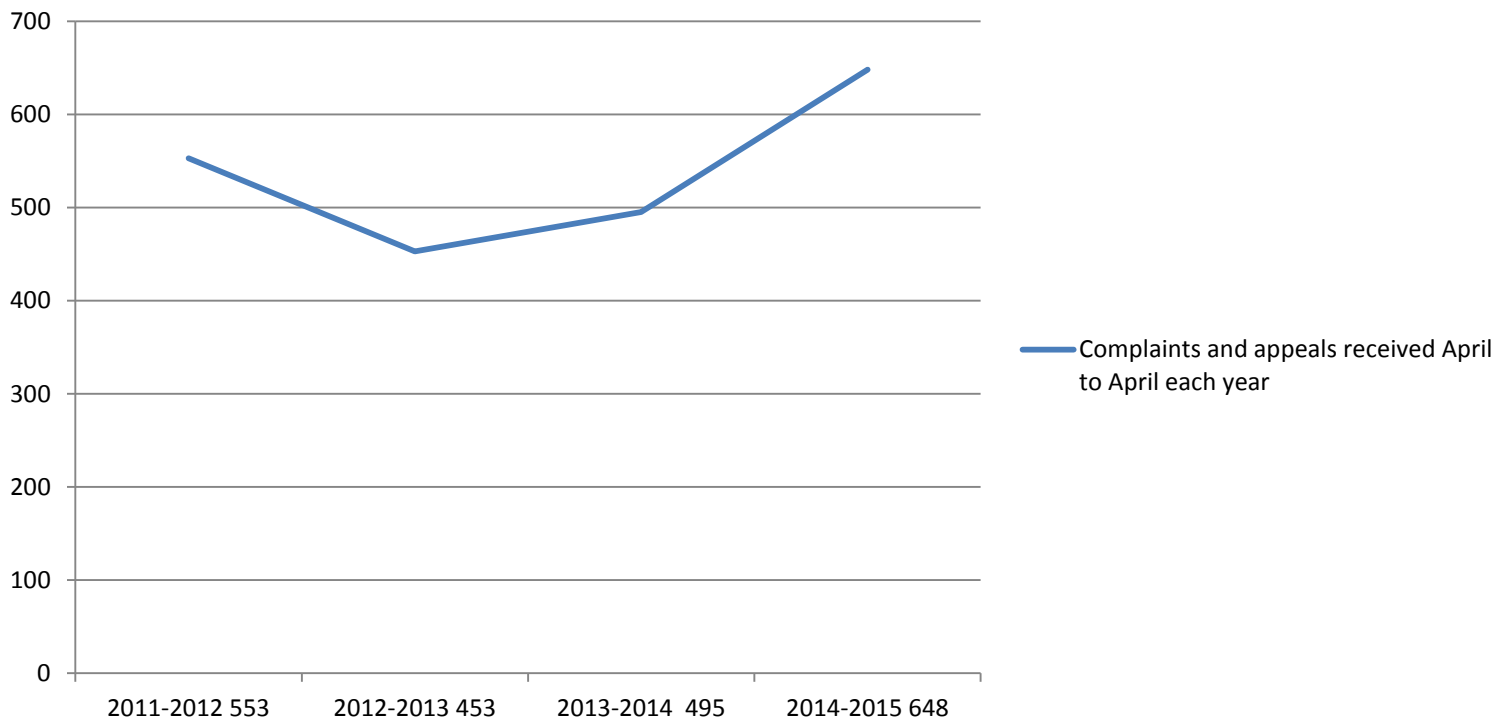


# Four years of complaints

- There are nearly **1,000 providers** in our jurisdiction
- We have received complaints about nearly one third of them
- **Students from over 68 countries** have contacted us
- We received **2,150 complaints** and appeals in our first four years of operation (9 April 2011 to 8 April 2015)

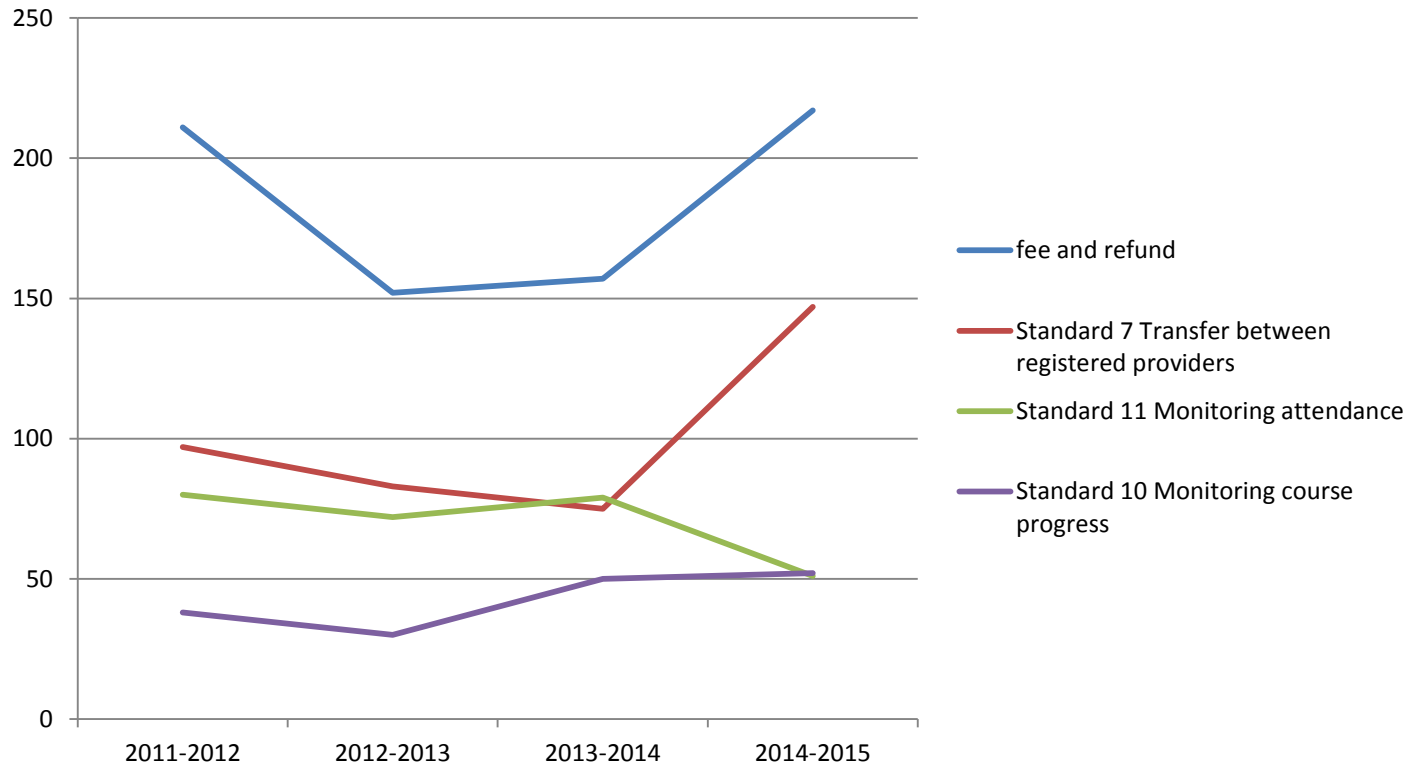
# Complaints are going up

**Complaints and appeals received 9 April to 8 April each year**

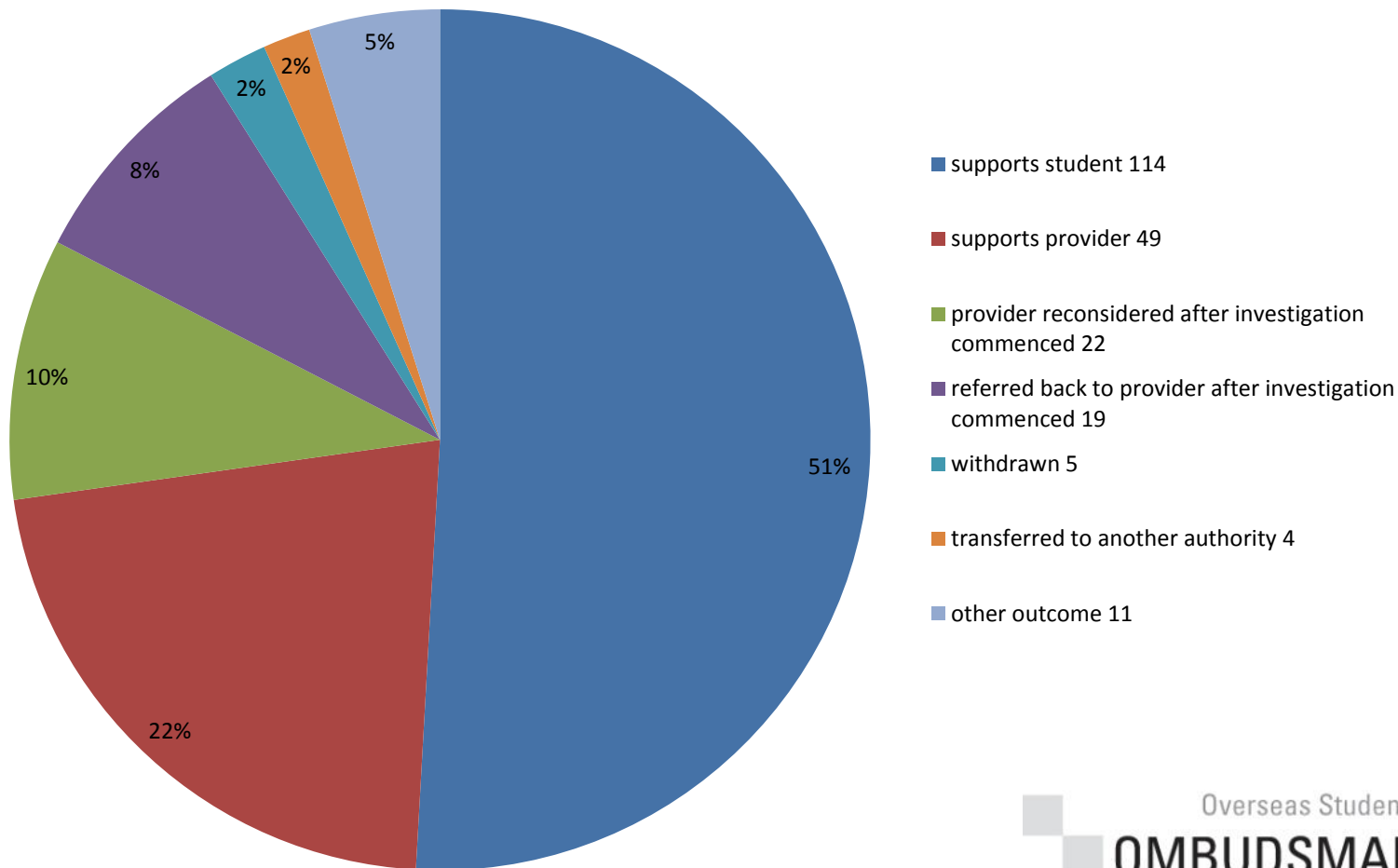




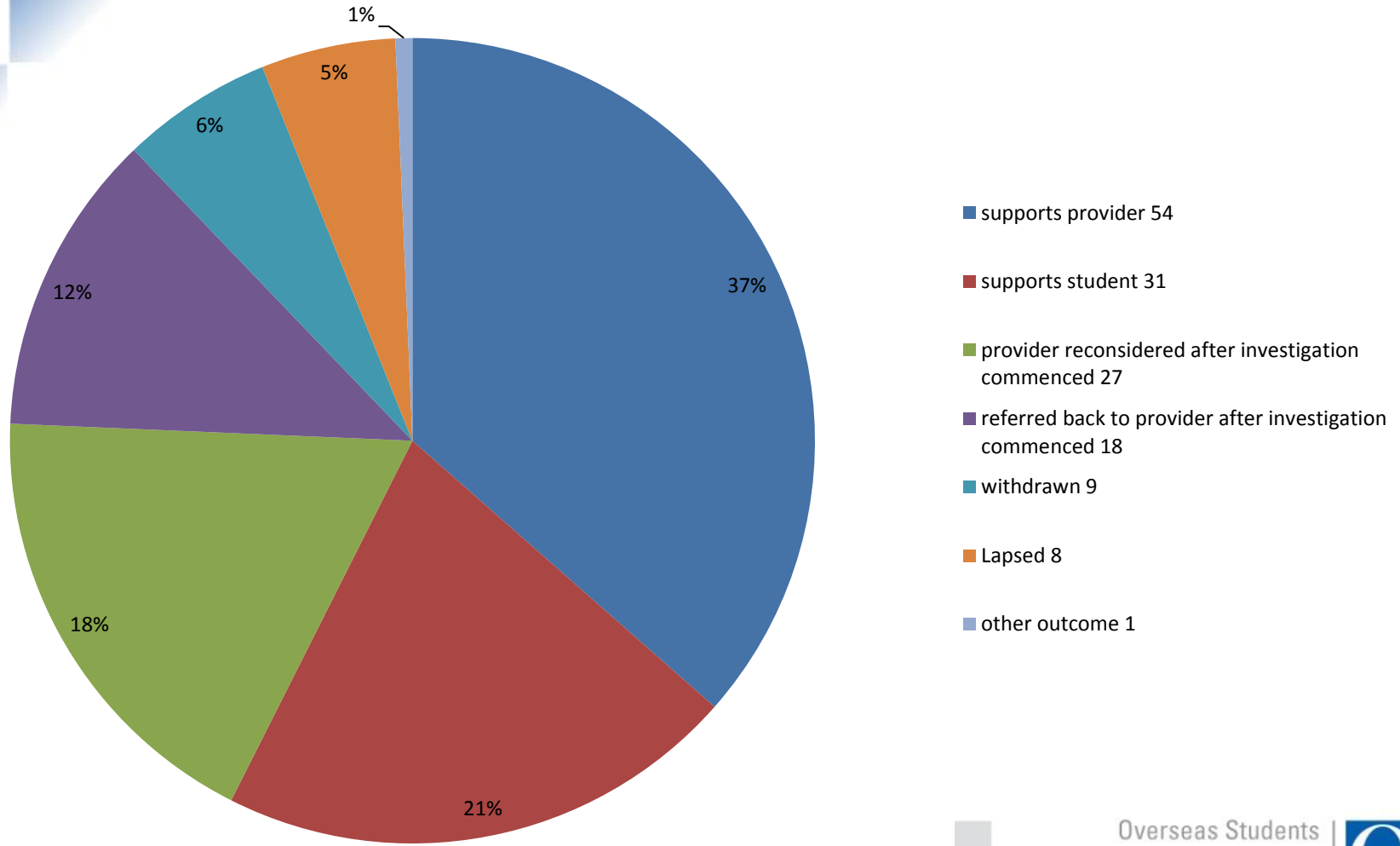
# Top Four Complaint issues



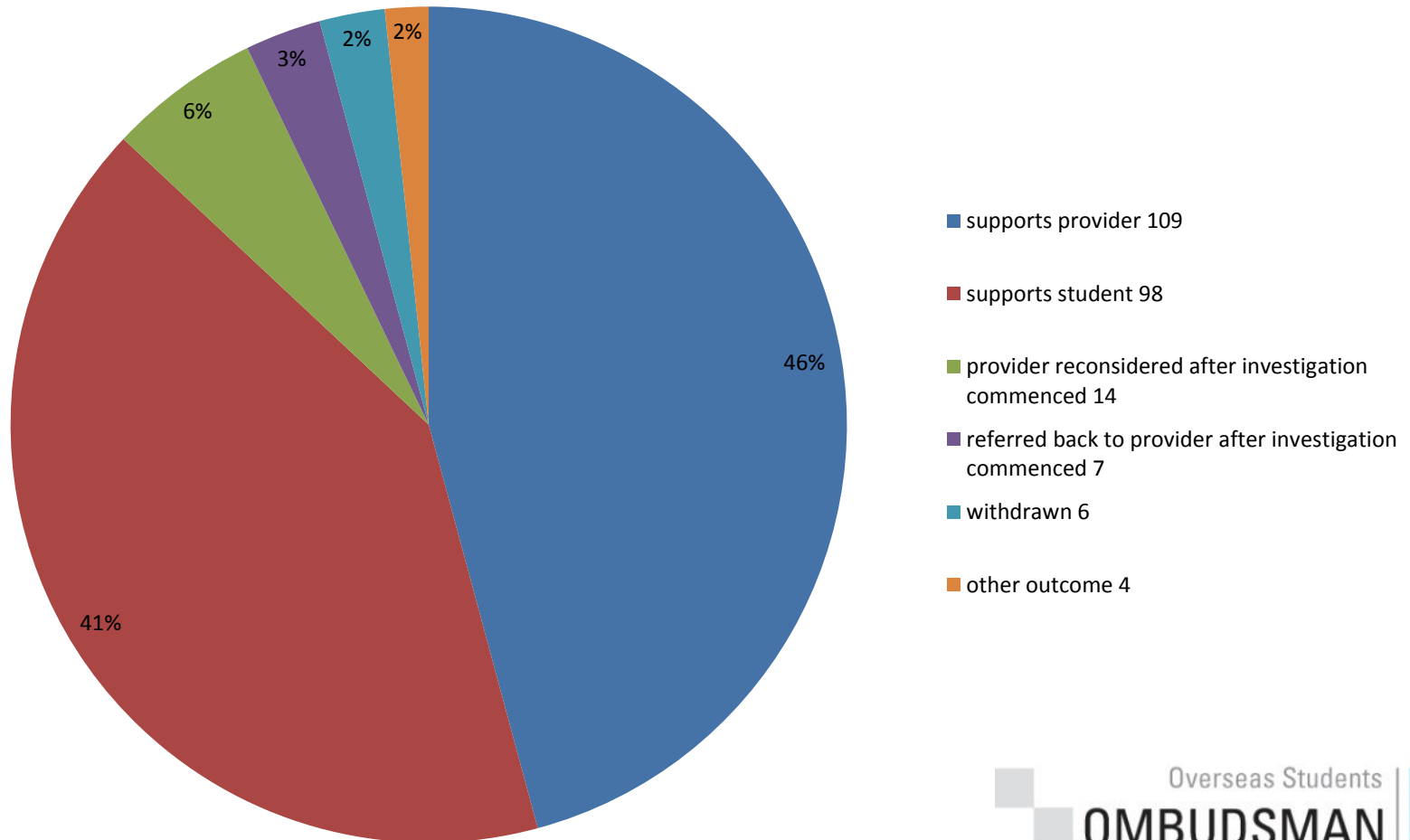
# Outcomes for investigated fee and refund complaints



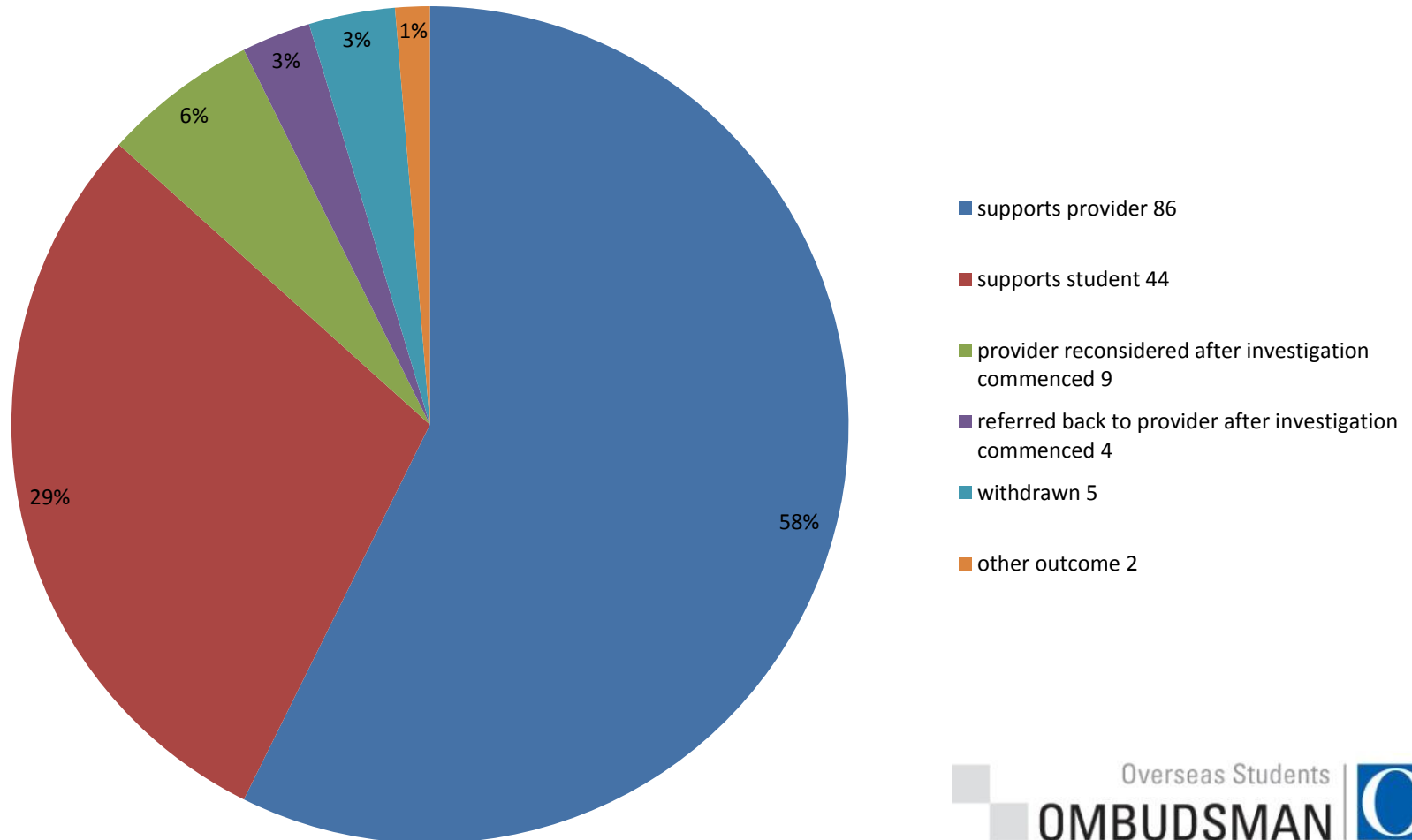
# Outcomes for investigated Standard 7 transfer appeals



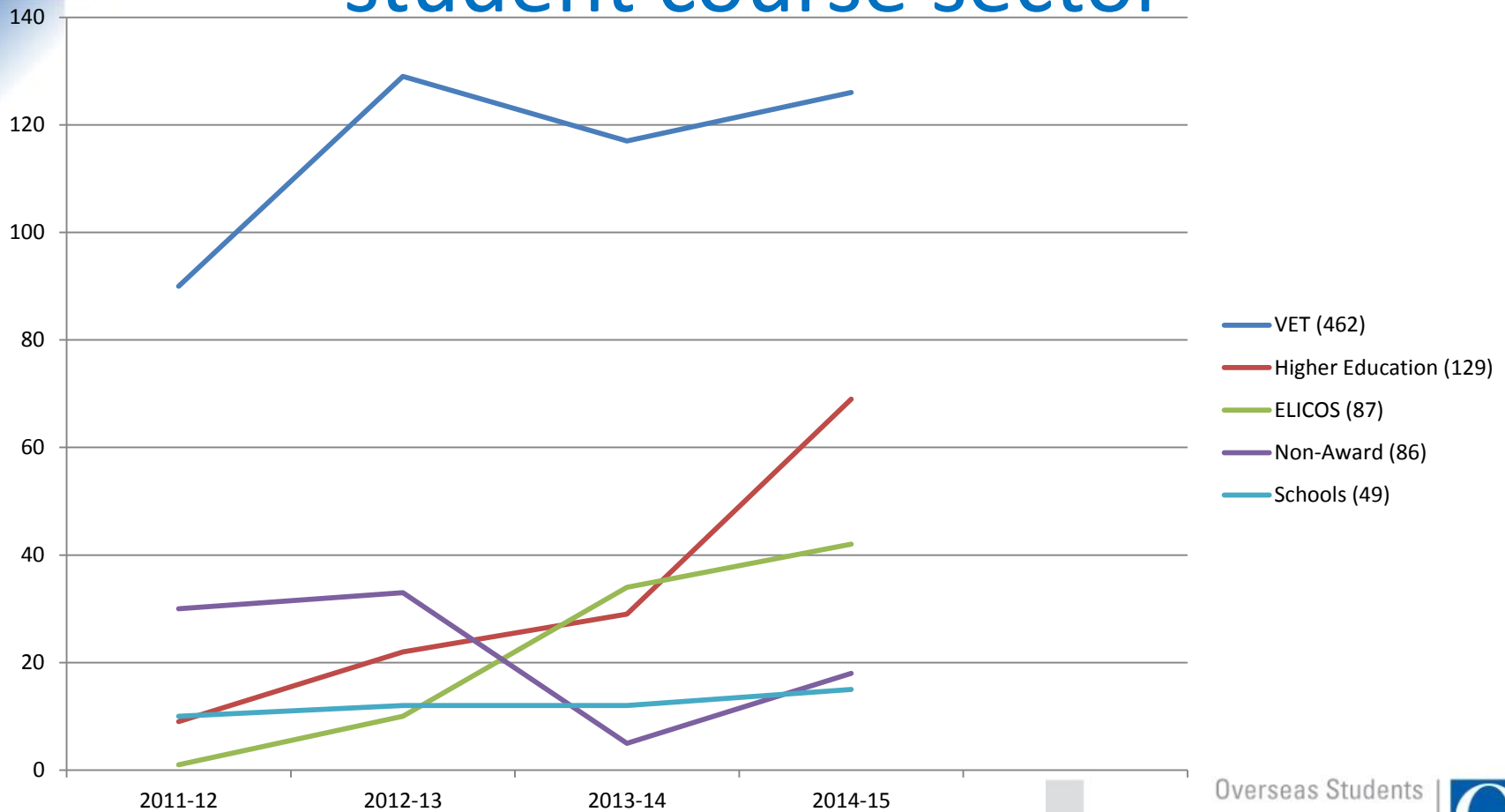
# Outcomes for Standard 11 attendance appeals



# Outcomes for Standard 10 course progress appeals



# Number of issues investigated by student course sector

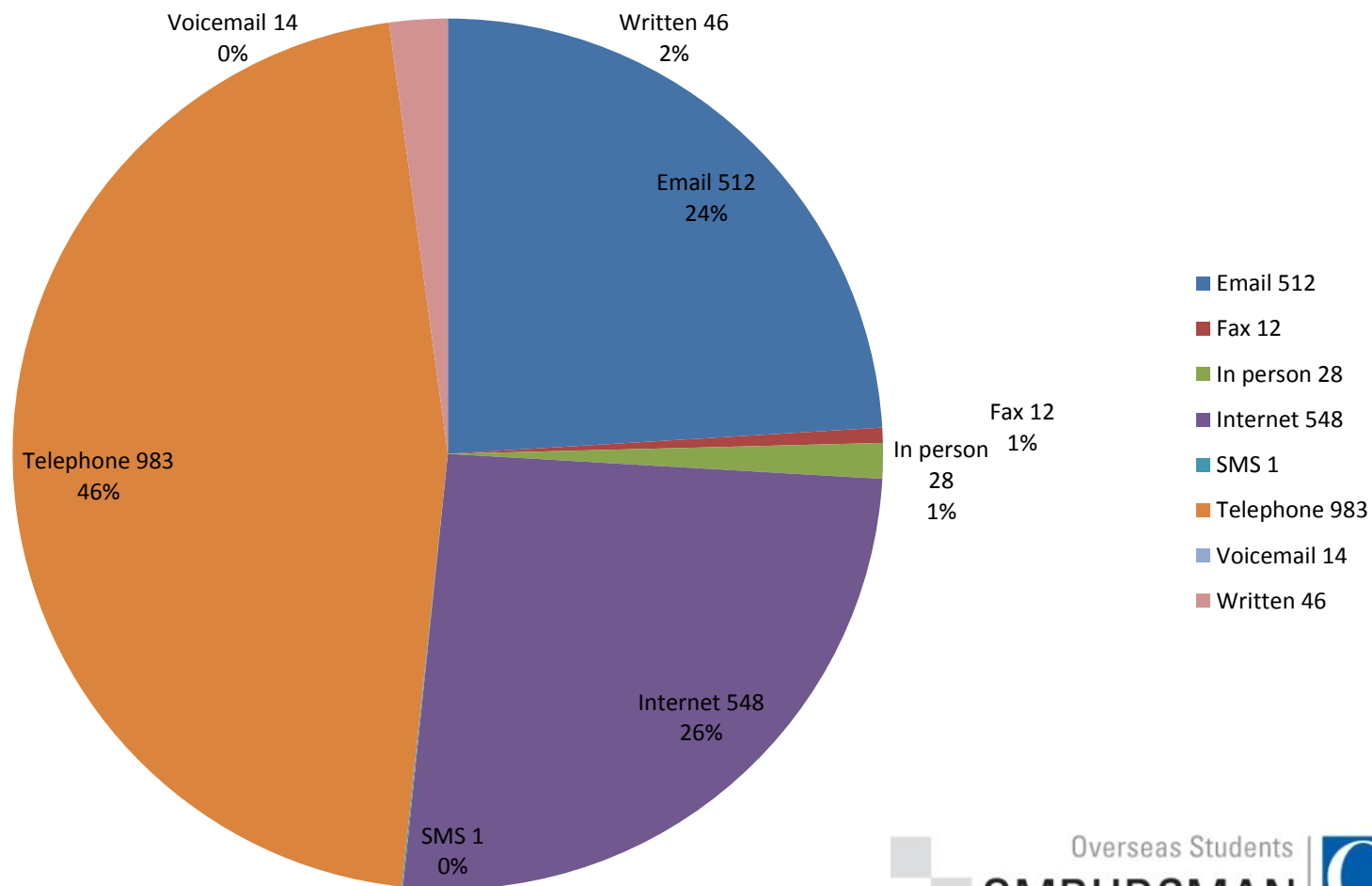




# Overseas students in private sector & OSO jurisdiction

- VET enrolments (85.6%)
- ELICOS (78.5% private)
- Schools (39.5% private)
- Non-award (17.9% private)
- Higher Education (14.9% private)

# Accessibility – how students contact the OSO





# What to tell students with a complaint

- Providers must have a documented internal complaints and appeals process and must:
  - Ensure their complaints and appeals policy is easily accessible
  - Keep written records of complaints
  - Acknowledge promptly, and keep students advised of progress
  - Allow students to have a support person or representative
  - Provide students with a written statement of the outcome, including details of the reasons for the outcome
- If the student's internal appeal is refused, they can contact the Ombudsman



# Tips for complaining

- Read the provider's complaints and appeals policy
- Complain in writing
- Clearly identify what the complaint is about
- Clearly identify the outcome you want
- Be calm and polite
- Keep records – copies of emails, letters etc
- Persist – contact the provider if they do not contact you
- Make sure you get a written outcome
- Contact the Ombudsman if not happy with the outcome

# Next steps for OSO

- Exploring new and better ways to reach out to students including intending international students
- Responding to regulatory changes such as ESOS and Student visa reform.
- Continuing to promote best practice complaint handling by providers.



# Student feedback at CISA conference

- For discussion:
  - Use CISA's social media channels
  - Single complaints page on CISA website



# Questions?

[www.oso.gov.au](http://www.oso.gov.au)