

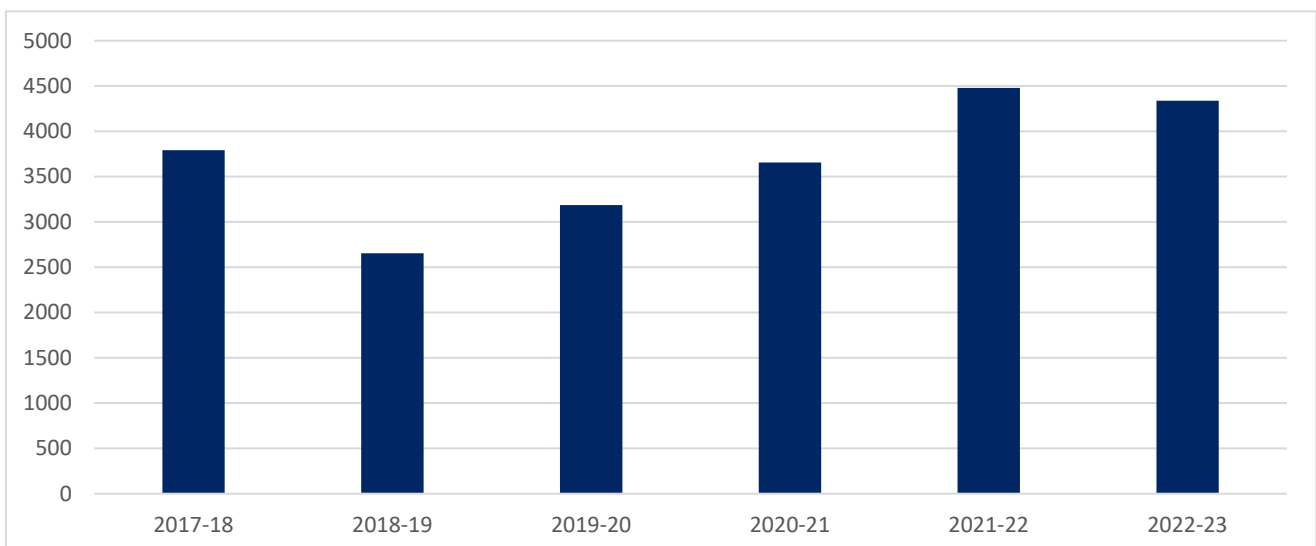
Annual Summary: 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

In its role as the Postal Industry Ombudsman (PIO) the Office investigates complaints about postal and similar services provided by Australia Post (AusPost) and Private Postal Operators.

AusPost is the only mandatory member of the PIO scheme. Private operators join voluntarily. StarTrack is currently the only voluntarily registered member. Cheque-Mates and D&D Mailing Services were both registered until 18 October 2022, and complainants have up to one year from the date of deregistration to raise complaints with the Office about issues that arose prior to deregistration.

We place a high priority on quick and informal dispute resolution and seek an outcome that is fair to both parties. Where a complaint indicates one or more systemic issues, we work with the postal operator to address these and influence improvements in their service and administration.

Figure 1: Total complaints received by the Postal Industry Ombudsman, 2017-18 to 2022-23

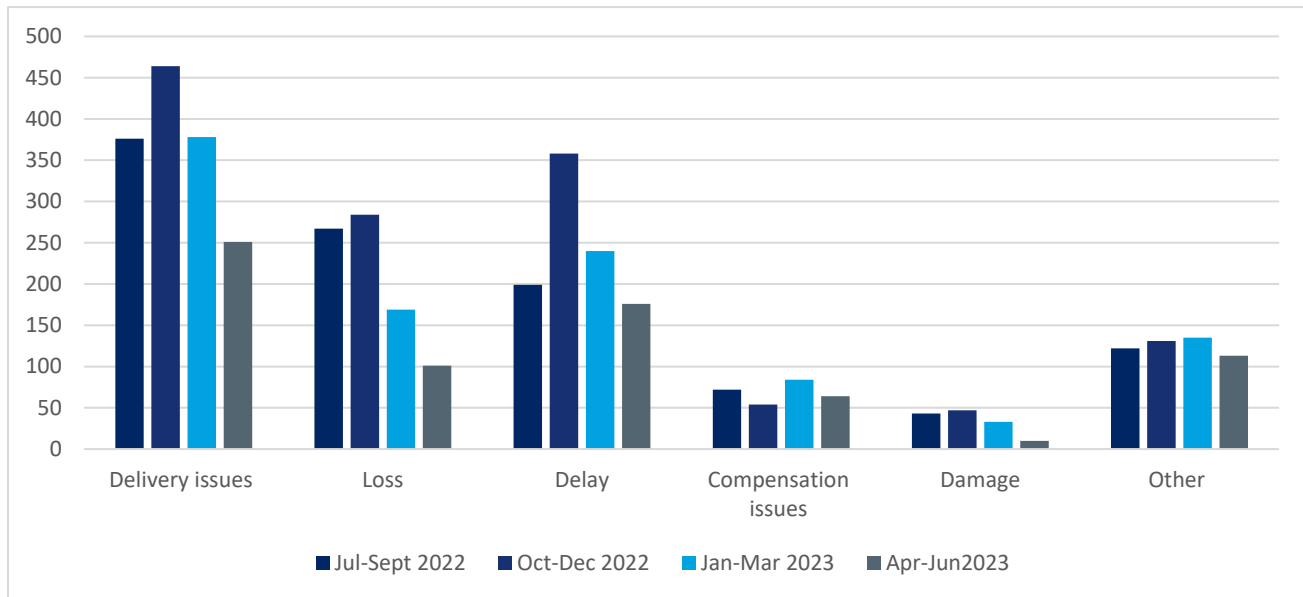


Summary

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, the Office received 4,337 postal industry¹ complaints. This was a decrease of approximately 3% compared to the preceding 12 months when we received 4,481 complaints. Complaint numbers increased sharply during the COVID-19 lockdowns which resulted in significant disruptions to postal services but have remained relatively stable since that time. The pandemic also caused a change in consumer behaviour towards shopping from home and this increase in the volume of parcel delivery services may be permanent.

Figure 2, below, illustrates the numbers and themes of postal complaints over the last 12 months. Complaints about delivery issues, loss and delay peaked in the October to December 2022 quarter, coinciding with the usual increase in parcel volumes during the lead up to Christmas.

¹ Includes complaints about postal and similar services provided by Australia Post and registered Private Postal Operators. Further information on our Postal Industry Ombudsman jurisdiction is available at [Postal Industry Ombudsman - Commonwealth Ombudsman](#).

Figure 2: Complaint issues: Comparative data for July 2022 to June 2023

Case Study – post office service restriction

A person complained to the Office after they were banned from attending their local Licenced Post Office (LPO). They claimed the LPO had imposed a service restriction because they complained about ongoing delivery issues. They first learned about the ban when attempting to collect a parcel from the LPO. The licensee asked them to leave and advised they would need to collect their mail from an alternative post office located 20 kilometres away. The police also attended the person’s address and issued them with a trespass notice.

Our Office made enquiries with AusPost to determine if the service restriction was applied appropriately. AusPost advised us that the licensee of the LPO contacted the LPO Network Manager, notifying of a hostile interaction with the customer. The Network Manager advised the licensee to contact the police if customers displayed hostile behaviour towards staff, and to direct any future parcels for the customer to an alternative postal outlet, so as to avoid further interactions. No notice was given to the customer of the new service arrangement.

After investigating the complaint, we concluded the process followed in applying the service restrictions was not correct. In particular, AusPost did not give the person adequate notice of the change to their mail delivery arrangements or provide the opportunity for them to dispute the decision. It also failed to keep contemporaneous records of the incidents that led to the decision to impose a ban or consider alternative measures before implementing the restriction. If the correct processes were followed, the person’s conduct would have been reviewed before a decision was made to either issue them with a Warning Letter, or a Notification Letter, which would have included:

- The duration of the change or restriction imposed
- The time period for review
- The name and contact details of the senior officer who they could contact to discuss the letter and/or seek a review of the decision.

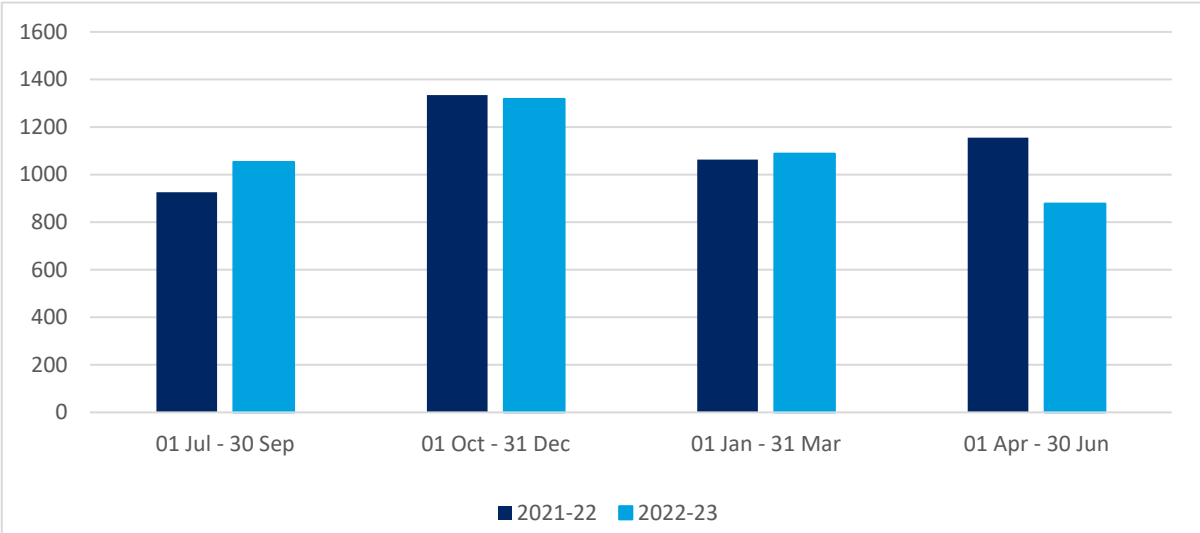
We noted that had the person been correctly notified, the maximum restriction period would have already lapsed. Our view was that AusPost should take action to place the person in the position they would have been in if the correct processes had been followed.

In response, AusPost agreed to lift the service restriction. It also provided feedback to staff responsible for the postal outlet regarding the correct processes for deciding and implementing service restrictions.

Complaints received²

Complaints received by quarter

Figure 3: Complaints received by quarter compared to the same quarter in previous years



Complaints received by postal operator

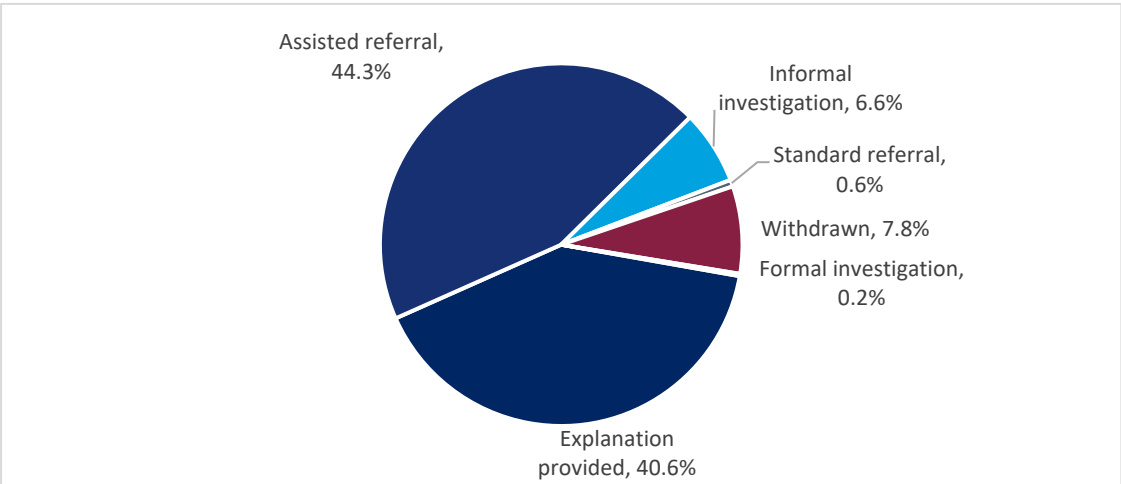
Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, we received 4,337 complaints, comprising:

- 4,215 (97%) about Australia Post
- 122 (3%) about Star Track

Actions taken to finalise complaints

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, we finalised 4,086 postal industry complaint which represents a 6 per cent decrease compared to 2021-22.

Figure 4: How complaints were finalised



² Includes complaints about Australia Post and private postal operators registered by the Postal Industry Ombudsman and complaints about Australia Post under the Commonwealth Ombudsman jurisdiction.

Data

The data in this update is for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. Some figures may differ from the Annual Report as our data is dynamic and regularly updated as new information comes to light. Previous Postal Industry Ombudsman updates are available on the Ombudsman's [website](#).