

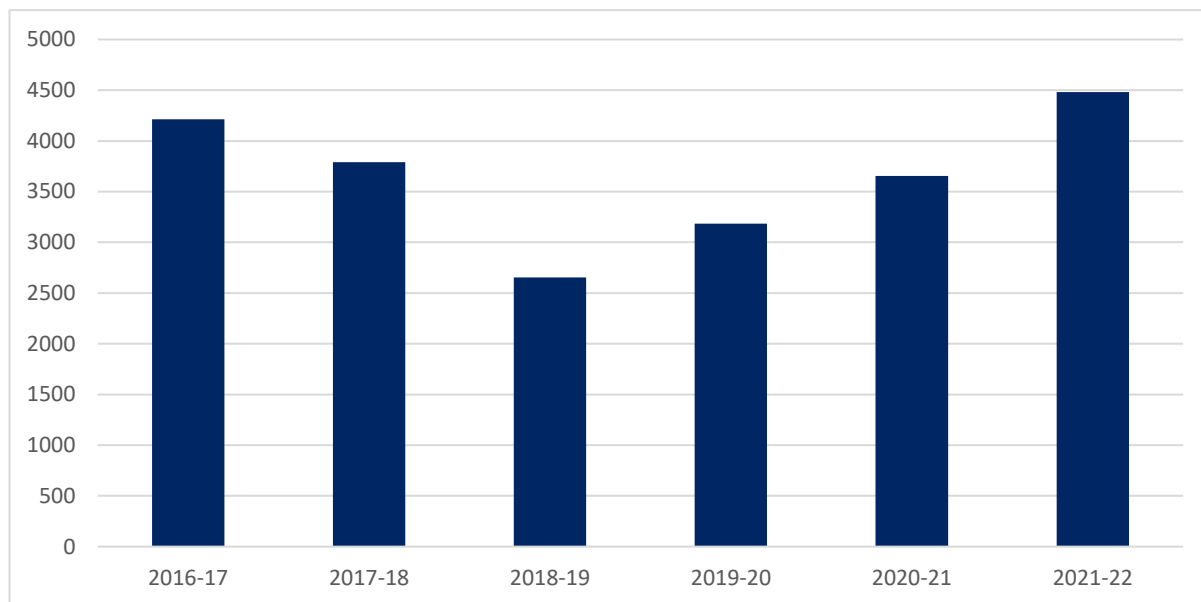
Annual Summary: 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022

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.

Australia Post is the only mandatory member of the PIO scheme. Private operators join voluntarily. Current registered members are StarTrack, Cheque-Mates and D Mailing Services. Federal Express Australia (FedEx Australia) was registered until 1 April 2021, following which complainants had up to one year to lodge complaints about issues that arose before that date.

We place a high priority on quick and informal dispute resolution and seek an outcome fair to both parties. Where complaints indicate systemic issues, we work with the postal operator to address these problems and influence improvements in their service and administration.

Figure 1: Total complaints received by the Postal Industry Ombudsman, 2016-17 to 2021-22

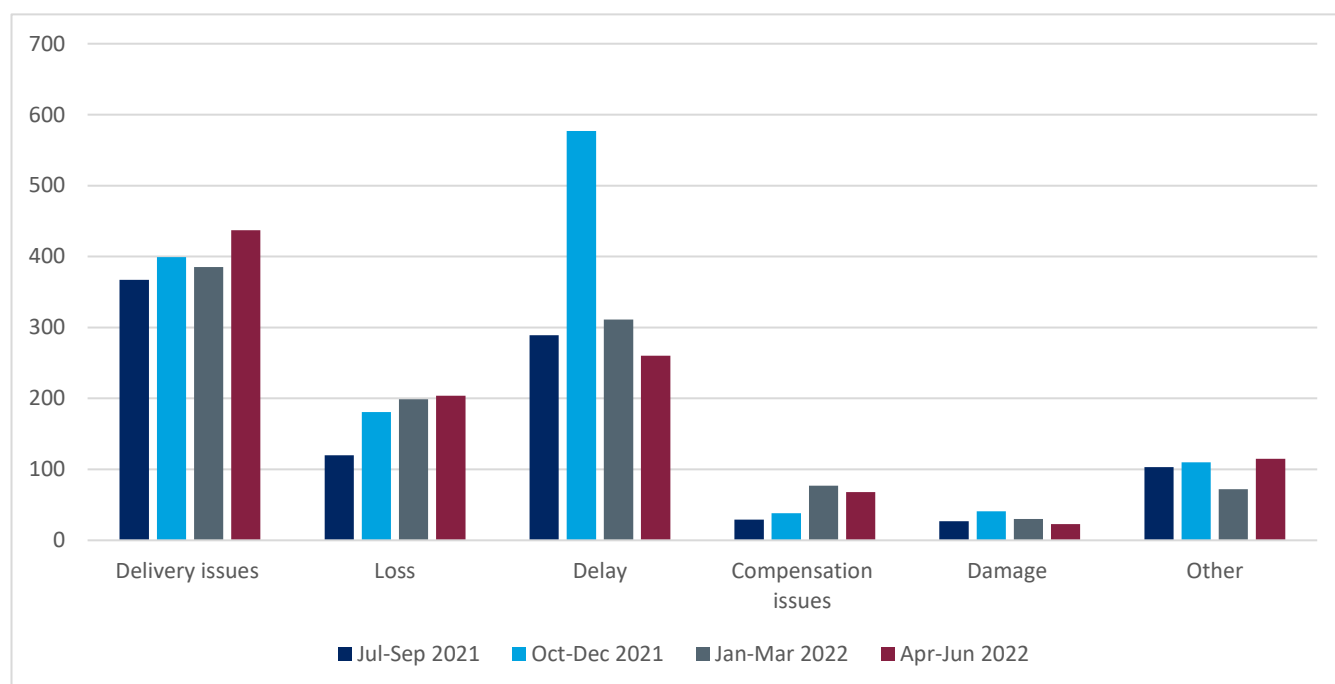


Summary

Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, the Office received 4,481 postal industry¹ complaints. This was an increase of 22.6% on the preceding 12 months when we received 3,656 complaints. The increase aligned with widespread COVID-19 lockdowns which resulted in significant disruptions to postal services.

Figure 2 below illustrates the numbers and themes of postal complaints over the year. Complaints about delays peaked at 577 complaints in the October to December 2021 quarter, a 99 per cent increase on the previous quarter, due to widespread lockdowns in the second half of 2021. Online shopping and parcel delivery increased during lockdown periods, which in turn led to increased pressure on postal services. Delay complaints returned to more normal levels in 2022.

Figure 2: Complaint issues: Comparative data for July 2021 to June 2022



The postal system and particularly Australia Post experienced unprecedented demands on their services during the final quarter of 2021 and it is unsurprising complaints peaked at that time.

Further service disruptions were experienced across the network in 2022 because of flooding events in Queensland and New South Wales. This coincided with the resurgence of COVID-19 and the resulting impacts on staff availability due to isolation requirements.

In response to the effects of COVID-19 on its operations, in July 2020, the Parliament granted Australia Post regulatory relief to allow it to refocus services to where they were immediately required. This allowed for changes including mail being delivered less frequently in metropolitan areas, its priority letters service being suspended, and intrastate delivery times being extended. The regulatory relief ended on 1 July 2021. The Office understands Australia Post has returned to normal service.

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](#).

Case Study – international parcel held by overseas customs authority

Namita sent a parcel overseas with Extra Cover, which is optional protection sold by Australia Post for items more than \$100 in value. The tracking information showed the parcel was delivered to the destination country but had been held by the destination country's customs authority for several months.

Namita contacted Australia Post and asked what options were available. Australia Post said it would seek to have the parcel returned and, if the parcel could not be returned, it would pay the value of the item to the complainant because they had purchased Extra Cover.

Australia Post traced the parcel and confirmed it had been seized by the overseas customs authority. Australia Post advised the customer that, since the parcel had been seized by an overseas customs authority, and had not been lost or damaged, no compensation was payable.

In response to our enquiries, Australia Post advised the overseas customs authority had held the parcel for 5 months but then destroyed it because customs duties were not paid. Australia Post explained it is the sender's responsibility to check whether duties are payable for sending items overseas.

Upon review, Australia Post agreed that it should have advised Namita to contact the overseas customs authority and that Namita likely did not contact the overseas customs authority because of Australia Post's advice that Australia Post would take steps to assist.

On this basis, Australia Post agreed to provide full compensation of \$3200 for both the value of the item and postage costs.

Case Study – parcel delivery to a communal residential address

Jeff lived in a lifestyle village and complained Australia Post was not delivering parcels to his door. Instead, parcels were delivered to the village's management office where residents could collect them during business hours.

The complainant raised the matter with Australia Post, and, at one point, parcels were delivered to their front door. However, this stopped shortly afterwards and Australia Post advised the complainant it could not make deliveries inside the village because it was private property.

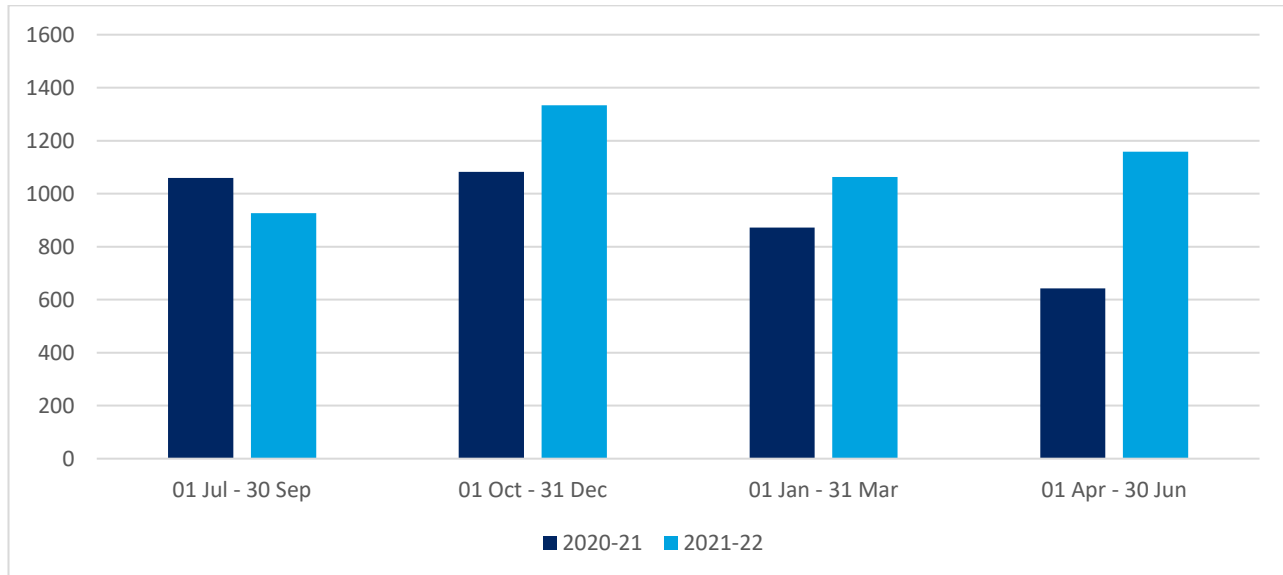
Australia Post explained the lifestyle village was listed as a single delivery point and the units were not gazetted as individual delivery points serviced by Australia Post. It also confirmed the village's management had requested that parcels be delivered directly to the reception rather than to individual units. Australia Post acknowledged it had previously delivered items to Jeff's home, even though this was not its standard practice. Australia Post suggested the complainant consider using its Parcel Collect or Parcel Locker services.

After considering the complaint, we confirmed Australia Post was not obliged to deliver to individual units in a residential village that is private property. We suggested that, if the parcel collection options Australia Post offered were not feasible, the complainant could speak to the village owners to make other arrangements.

Complaints received²

Complaints received by quarter

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



Complaints by postal operator

Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, we received 4,481 complaints, comprising:

- 4319 complaints (96.4 per cent) about Australia Post
- 152 complaints (3.4 per cent) about StarTrack
- 9 complaints (0.2 per cent) about Federal Express³
- 1 complaint (<0.1 per cent) about D&D

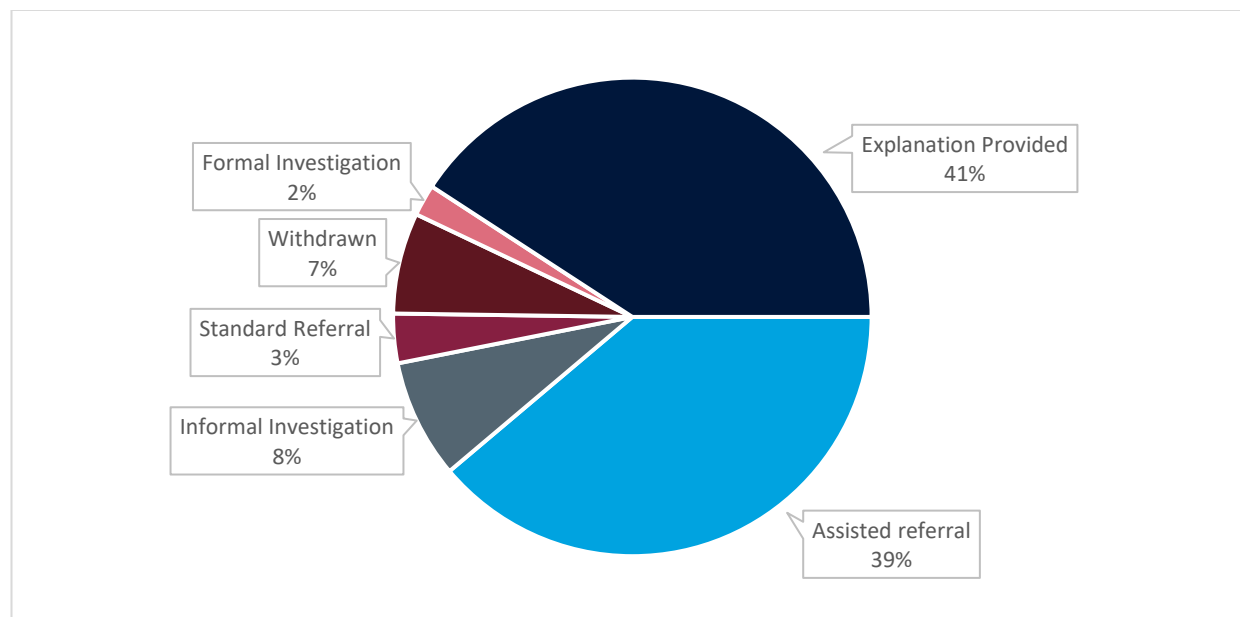
Actions taken to finalise complaints

Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, we finalised 4,358 postal industry complaints which represents a 22.9 per cent increase compared to 2020-21.

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.

³ Federal Express Australia left the Postal Industry Ombudsman scheme on 1 April 2021 but complainants could still have complaints considered for a further 12 months.

Figure 4: How complaints were finalised



Data

The data in this update is for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. Our data is dynamic and regularly updated as new information comes to light.

Postal industry updates were previously published on a quarterly basis. Following a review of our publications, we changed to an annual format for 2021–22 to ensure updates were concise and targeted. Previous quarterly updates are available on the Ombudsman's [website](#).

More information is available at ombudsman.gov.au