



THE SOCIAL
RESEARCH CENTRE

2004 SURVEY OF EMPLOYER AND NEW APPRENTICE SATISFACTION WITH NEW APPRENTICESHIPS CENTRES

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NATIONAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Department of Education, Science and Training commissioned the independent research company, the Social Research Centre Pty Ltd to undertake customer satisfaction surveys amongst employers and New Apprentices that had used the services of New Apprenticeships Centres (NAC) in the six months prior to May 2004. This report presents the findings of this research and is based on telephone interviews with 5,687 employers and 5,940 New Apprentices.

Overall Performance

The main purpose of this research is to monitor NACs' performance against that part of Key Performance Indicator 2 in the New Apprenticeships Support Services (NASS) contract that relates to New Apprentices' and employers' overall satisfaction with the services provided by NACs. The KPI target is for 80% employer and New Apprentice satisfaction with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre.

The results from the current research show that, nationally, 90.2% of employers and 92.6% of New Apprentices are satisfied or very satisfied with the services they receive from their New Apprenticeships Centre. The benchmark was met across all regions and by all New Apprenticeships Centre in respect of New Apprentices. In terms of employer satisfaction, the KPI benchmark was met in 21 of 22 regions. The Northern WA region, with an overall employer satisfaction rating of 78.4%, was marginally below the 80% target.

Results for Employers

Main Drivers of Satisfaction

The main drivers of overall satisfaction for employers centred on the perceived quality of the information and advice provided by their NAC, reliability and responsiveness, the perception that their NAC was well-informed and understood their business needs and that their NAC was easy to contact. The service attribute that, if improved, is most likely to have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction is that of acting quickly to meet employer needs.

Choice of NAC

The factors shaping employers' choice of a NAC are 'previous contact', as mentioned by 27% of employers, recommendations (26%), a perceived lack of choice (14%), being approached by the NAC themselves (12%) and convenience of location (10%). Business conditions permitting, over nine in ten employers (93.1%) intended to use New Apprenticeships again and a similar proportion (92.7%) would use the same NAC. Larger employers (500 employees or more) were less likely to report intending to re-use the same NAC again (91.3%).

Ratings for Specific Aspects of Customer Service

Over ninety percent of employers had favourable impressions of the service provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre across the five dimensions of customer service measured – staff knowledge, ease of contact, reliability, responsiveness and understanding of employer business needs.

Information Provision

Ninety four percent of employers were satisfied with the information provided to them by New Apprenticeships Centres with ratings over 90% with respect to the accuracy, relevance, consistency, timeliness and ease of understanding of the information or advice provided.

On the whole, employers were well-informed about their eligibility for incentives and allowances, their rights and obligations under their training agreement and their role and responsibilities as an employer, with approximately nine in ten recalling being provided with information or advice covering these areas. Fewer employers recalled receiving information about training options – how training is delivered (70%), range of training courses (63%), training services (63%), the role of the State Training Authority (57%) and how to change or adapt training (51%). Fewer still recalled receiving information about the financial assistance available for employing Indigenous people (48%) or people with a disability (44%). This suggests more can be done by NACs in working towards the KPI 4 outcome of contributing to improved participation levels in New Apprenticeships amongst Indigenous Australians and people with disabilities.

Signing Up New Apprentices and Receipt of Incentive Payments

Among employers that had an apprentice or trainee commence in the previous six months (51% of those interviewed), 96% agreed that their New Apprenticeships Centre had made the sign up process as easy as possible and, despite a third (34%) needing help with the paperwork, 99% were satisfied with the assistance provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre in completing the 'sign-up' paperwork.

Fifty nine percent of employers had applied for incentive payments, of whom 67% (45% of all employers) received help from their NAC with the application process. Once again, satisfaction with this aspect of service was almost universal with 97% of employers satisfied with the help from their NAC in relation to incentive payments.

Follow Up Contact and Complaints Handling

Sixty five percent of employers that had an apprentice or trainee commence in the previous six months recalled being contacted by the NAC responsible for that placement during that time and 54% of all respondents had initiated contact with their NAC over the same period.

Nationally, 91% of employers are satisfied with the contact they had with a NAC. Satisfaction levels were higher amongst larger employers.

Five percent of employers reported feeling like making a complaint about their NAC and 44% of these employers (2% of the population) actually went on to make a complaint. The level of potential complaints was highest among larger employers (11% for those with 500 or more employees) and varied considerably by region – ranging from a low of 2% in Central and South Eastern WA region and peaking at 14% in the Northern WA region.

Overall Impressions of New Apprenticeships

When asked to consider all aspects of New Apprenticeships, 90% of employers were satisfied with New Apprenticeships. No significant differences were observed by employer characteristics excepting that employers in the Northern WA region were the least satisfied (79%), followed by those in Southern WA (81%).

Amongst those satisfied with New Apprenticeships, over half (52%) reported that they had no problems or that the system and structure generally work well. Twenty four percent of satisfied employers also reported that they received good service. Training was also cited by a number of employers as a reason for their satisfaction with the system with 14% mentioning the overall relevance of the training, 14% mentioning the quality of the training and 11% mentioning the ease of organising the training.

The most common reason given for dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships related to NACs service (34%), however, various issues relating to training were mentioned by nearly half of those dissatisfied (47%).

When asked specifically about the importance of incentives nearly two in three employers (63%) reported feeling that incentives were an important factor in the decision to employ a New Apprentice. This was particularly the case amongst large employers.

Results for New Apprentices

Main Drivers of Satisfaction

The main drivers of overall satisfaction for New Apprentices are the perceived reliability of their NAC, the responsiveness of the service provided (i.e. acting quickly to meet their needs and information given when needed) and the quality of the information provided (as indicated by having knowledgeable staff and being provided with consistent and relevant information). Analysis of the survey results indicates that a focus on the continuing provision of 'reliable service' will provide NACs with the best return for effort in terms of continuing to maintain / improve the favourable impressions held by New Apprentices.

Ratings for Specific Aspects of Customer Service

Over ninety percent of New Apprentices had favourable impressions of the service provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre across the four dimensions of customer service measured – staff knowledge, ease of contact, reliability and responsiveness (i.e. quick to meet needs).

Information Provision

Ninety five percent of New Apprentices were satisfied with the information or advice provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre with ratings over 90% with respect to the relevance, consistency, timeliness and ease of understanding of the information or advice provided.

Follow Up Contact

Excluding contact relating to the Living Away From Home Allowance, 14% of New Apprentices had contacted their New Apprenticeships Centre in the six months prior to the survey. The proportion was slightly higher for apprentices (compared with trainees) and females and those aged under 25 years of age. The reasons given by New Apprentices for contacting their NAC include problems with form completion, training related issues, wages queries, problems with employers and problems with training providers.

The proportion of New Apprentices satisfied with the service provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre when contacted was 89%. This result showed a considerable degree of regional variation from 79% in Northern Queensland to 99% in both Central Queensland and South Queensland.

Problems Encountered and Complaints Handling

Based on responses to a prompted question regarding problems encountered by New Apprentices, it appears that the most common query or concern is whether or not they are receiving the correct wages (mentioned by 10% of New Apprentices).

Four per cent of New Apprentices felt like making a complaint and 1% actually went on to make a complaint (or had someone complain on their behalf). Trainees were more likely to make a complaint than apprentices. The regional results show Northern WA, the Northern Territory, Southern WA and Western NSW as the regions where the highest proportion of New Apprentices felt like making a complaint about the services they received from their NAC.

Only 45% of New Apprentices reported being satisfied with the way their complaint was handled.

Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)

Nationally, 62% of New Apprentices were aware of the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA). This result shows a considerable degree of regional variation (ranging from 49% in Adelaide to 85% in Central Queensland) with awareness levels generally higher outside of the capital cities.

A total of 3% of New Apprentices applied for LAFHA and 2% reported receiving it. As would be expected, most of the New Apprentices who reported having applied for LAFHA were under 25 years of age. Males were more than twice as likely (4.2%) than females (2%) to have applied for LAFHA. The regions with the highest rates of LAFHA applications were Northern Queensland and the Northern Territory. Forty five percent of New Apprentices found out about LAFHA via their NAC with family and friends being the next most important source (18%).

Just over one in five LAFHA applicants (22%) needed help in filling in the LAFHA Application form and 19% of New Apprentices who applied for LAFHA reported having problems other than those related to filling out the form. The majority of the problems related to delays in getting the payment or securing the necessary documentation to confirm eligibility.

Overall, 86% of New Apprentices were satisfied with the assistance they received when applying for LAFHA.

The detailed findings follow.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Department of Education, Science and Training commissioned the independent research company the Social Research Centre Pty Ltd to undertake customer satisfaction surveys amongst employers and New Apprentices that used the services of New Apprenticeships Centres (NACs) in the six months prior to May 2004. This report presents the findings of this research and is based on interviews with 5,687 employers and 5,940 New Apprentices.

The purpose of this research is to:

- monitor NACs performance against that part of Key Performance Indicator 2 in the New Apprenticeships Support Services (NASS) contract that relates to New Apprentices' and employers' overall satisfaction with the services provided by NACs;
- provide statistically valid and reliable data on New Apprentices and employers satisfaction with the quality of services provided by NACs; and
- contribute to the body of information on service quality thereby contributing to good practices in the delivery of NASS services.

All surveys were undertaken using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. The average interview length for the employer survey was 18 minutes (including a one-off module to measure employers' overall perceptions of New Apprenticeships) and 8 minutes for New Apprentices.

Summary fieldwork statistics and methodological details are provided in the Technical Notes appended to this report.

1.2 About this Report

The main focus of this report is on the presentation of the national results from each survey with an examination of the key results provided by region, and as appropriate, other employer and New Apprentice characteristics. This report presents the profile of the employer and New Apprentice samples (Section 2) before embarking on a more detailed examination of the results.

As a separate exercise individual reports showing selected survey results for each NAC within each defined New Apprenticeships Support Services (NASS) region have also been produced. In this way the results from these surveys will be available to each NAC at the local level.

The results presented in this report are based on “weighted” survey data. This means that the survey estimates have been adjusted so as to reflect the total population of employers and New Apprentices in receipt of NAC services over the six month reference period. Both samples were stratified by NAC and NASS region with a view to trying to obtain 80 interviews with employers and 80 interviews with New Apprentices for each NAC within each region¹. The impact of this weighting is to correct for any under or over representation of the customers of any one NAC that might have occurred as a result of the disproportionate stratified sampling methodology used for these surveys or as a result of variable stratum-level survey response rates. ‘Don’t Know’ responses have been excluded from those questions that used a five-point rating scale and the bases for these questions have been recalculated accordingly.

¹ It was not always possible to achieve the quotas of 80 interviews per NAC per region due to a lack of available records.

2 Respondent Profile

2.1 Profile of Employers

Two thirds of respondents to the employer survey were from companies employing less than 20 people and a similar proportion (64%) reported that their company had employed only one or two New Apprentices over the last 12 months. The vast majority of employers (88%) reported having had dealings with only the one New Apprenticeships Centre over the reference period. In over three quarters of cases (78%), the New Apprentice that was the focus of the employer interview was still receiving training.

Table 1: Profile of employers by selected characteristics

Selected Characteristics		Sample Size	%
Total		5687	100
Number of employees	Less than 20	3783	67
	20 - 99	1359	24
	100 - 499	385	7
	500 or more	148	3
State	NSW	1361	24
	VIC	1441	25
	QLD	982	17
	SA	640	11
	WA	640	11
	ACT	223	4
	TAS	320	6
	NT	80	1
Region	Sydney	401	7
	Riverina (NSW)	240	4
	Hunter / North Coast	240	4
	Illawarra / South East NSW	240	4
	Western NSW	240	4
	Melbourne	480	8
	Geelong	321	6
	Gippsland	320	6
	Victorian Central Highlands	320	6
	Brisbane	320	6
	Central Queensland	204	4
	Northern Queensland	234	4
	South Queensland	224	4
	Adelaide	400	7
	South Australia Country	240	4
	Perth	320	6
	Central / South Eastern WA	80	1
	Northern WA	80	1
	Southern WA	160	3
	ACT	223	4
	Tasmania	320	6
Northern Territory	80	1	

Selected Characteristics	Sample Size	%
Total	5687	100
Apprentices/trainees employed at any one time		
One/only ever had one	2398	42
Two	1268	22
Three	547	10
Four	322	6
Five	178	3
Six to ten	377	7
Eleven to twenty	212	4
More than twenty	297	5
Training Status of Selected New Apprentice		
Still training	4446	78
Completed training	354	6
Did not complete training	367	6
No longer employed	459	8

2.2 Profile of New Apprentices

Almost half of the New Apprentices interviewed were aged less than 20 (46%) with more males than females being surveyed (56:44). The split between trainees and apprentices was two thirds to one third with the vast majority (82%) still receiving their training (Table 2).

The main reasons given by the 10% of New Apprentices that either dropped out of or did not start their New Apprenticeship were employer or job related and included such categories as 'having found another job', 'resigning', 'being stood down' or 'not liking the job or the employer'. Only 2% cited difficulties with aspects of their New Apprenticeships arrangements as a reason for not continuing with their New Apprenticeship.

Table 2: Profile of New Apprentices by selected characteristics

Selected Characteristics		Sample Size	%
Total		5940	100
Gender			
	Female	2639	44
	Male	3301	56
Age Group			
	Less than 20	2727	46
	20-24	902	15
	25-34	853	14
	35-44	766	13
	45-54	554	9
	55 or over	138	2
Training type			
	Apprenticeship	1936	33
	Traineeship	3981	67
	Trainee-Apprenticeship	23	0
Training status			
	Completed	425	7
	Did not start	138	2
	Dropped out	466	8
	Still training	4883	82
	(Don't know)	28	0
State			
	NSW	1427	24
	VIC	1477	25
	QLD	1079	18
	SA	640	11
	WA	660	11
	ACT	246	4
	TAS	329	6
	NT	82	1

Selected Characteristics		Sample Size	%
Total		5940	100
Region			
	Sydney	432	7
	Riverina (NSW)	253	4
	Hunter / North Coast	248	4
	Illawarra / South East NSW	242	4
	Western NSW	252	4
	Melbourne	491	8
	Geelong	328	6
	Gippsland	321	5
	Victorian Central Highlands	337	6
	Brisbane	330	6
	Central Queensland	250	4
	Northern Queensland	247	4
	South Queensland	252	4
	Adelaide	400	7
	South Australia Country	240	4
	Perth	331	6
	Central / South Eastern WA	82	1
	Northern WA	80	1
	Southern WA	167	3
	ACT	246	4
	Tasmania	329	6
	Northern Territory	82	1

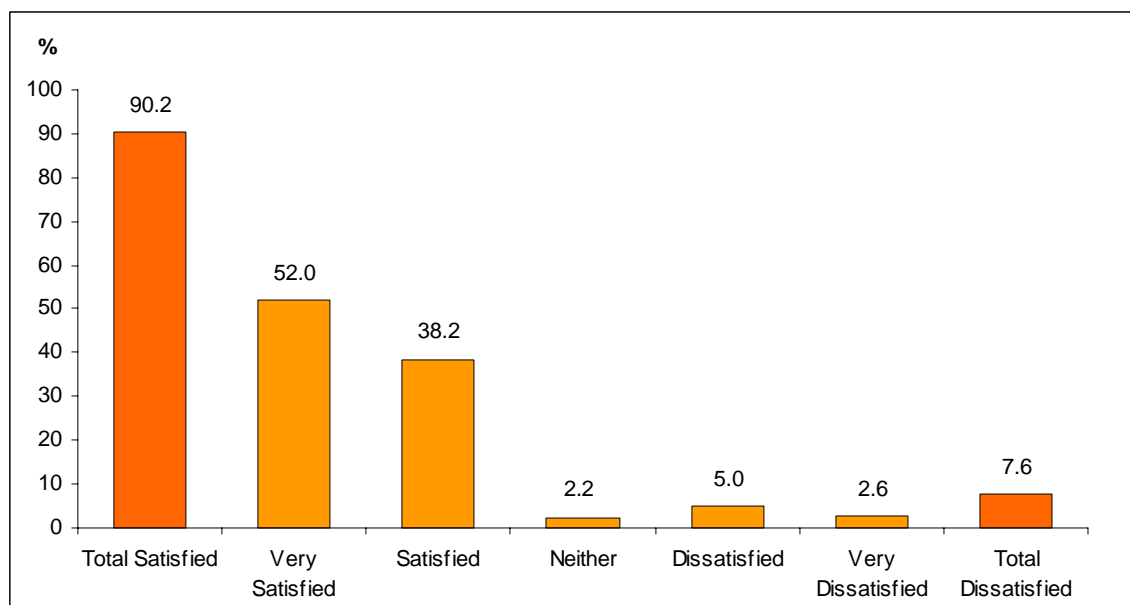
3 Results for Employers

3.1 Overall Satisfaction

3.1.1 National Result

Figure 1 shows the national overall satisfaction results for employers. The overall result of 90.2% satisfied is significantly above the KPI benchmark score of 80%. The distribution of the overall satisfaction result shows that over half of the employers interviewed (52%) were 'very satisfied' with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre. This is indicative of a very strong result as it is unusual in customer satisfaction research to have more 'very satisfied' customers than 'satisfied' customers (38.2%). While this is the case, there is still considerable scope to migrate employers from 'satisfied' to 'very satisfied'.

Figure 1 : Employer overall satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres – National results

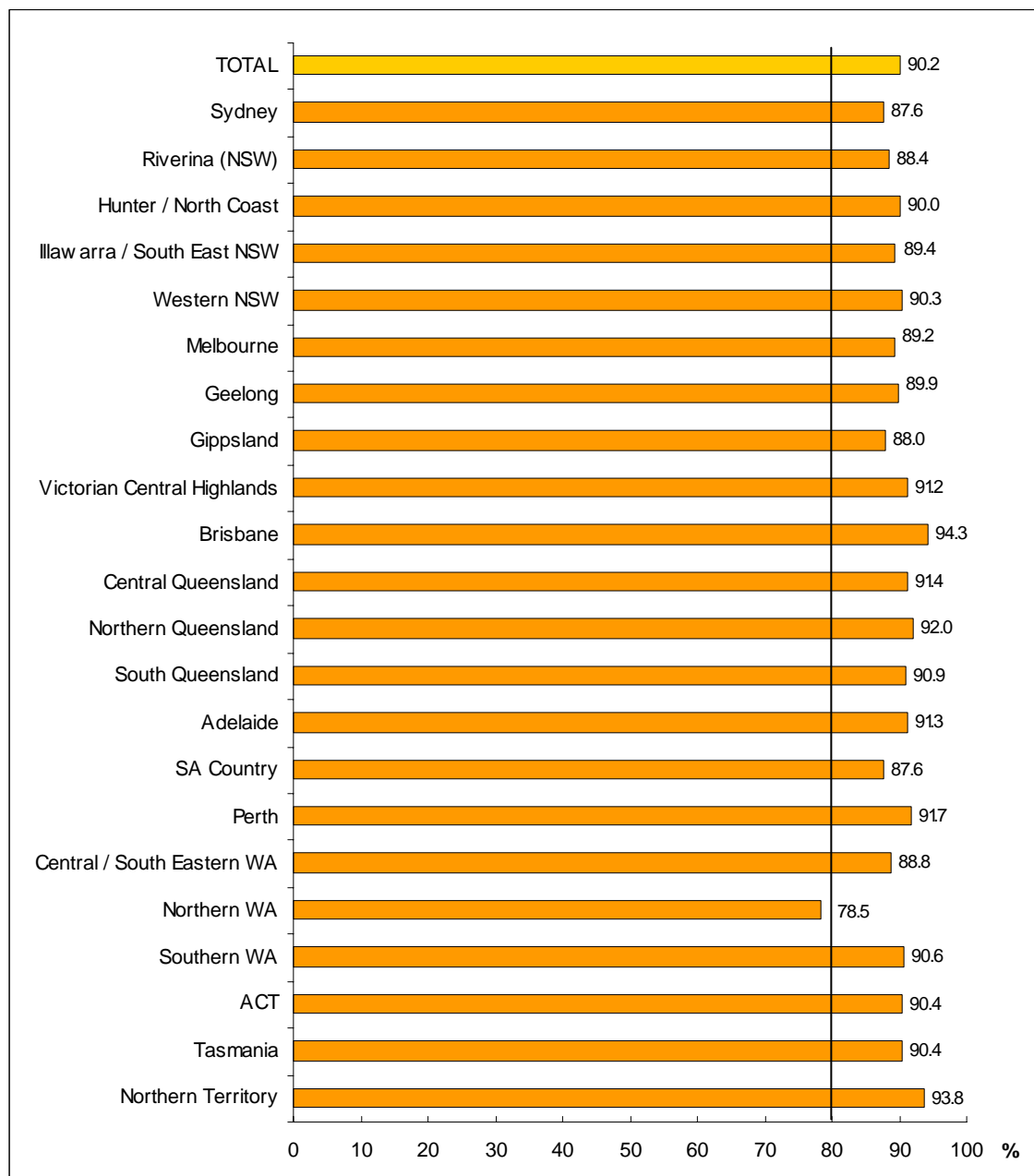


Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5645).

3.1.2 Regional Results

As illustrated in Figure 2, the KPI target score was met in all but one of the designated New Apprenticeships regions with the lowest regional result recorded in the Northern WA region (78.5%). Of the 72 contracts held by 37 providers across the 22 regions only 4 individual contracts failed to meet the 80% KPI target score for employer satisfaction. These were Central West Community College in the Hunter / North Coast region, ABEN New Apprenticeships Centre in Sydney, Apprentice Link in Adelaide and CCI Employfast in the Northern WA region. Overall satisfaction with NAC services was considerably higher for employers with between 100-499 employees (at around 96%) than it was for all other employer sizes (all at around 90%). This suggests some scope for improved service delivery to both small and very large employers.

Figure 2 : Employer overall satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres by region



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5645).

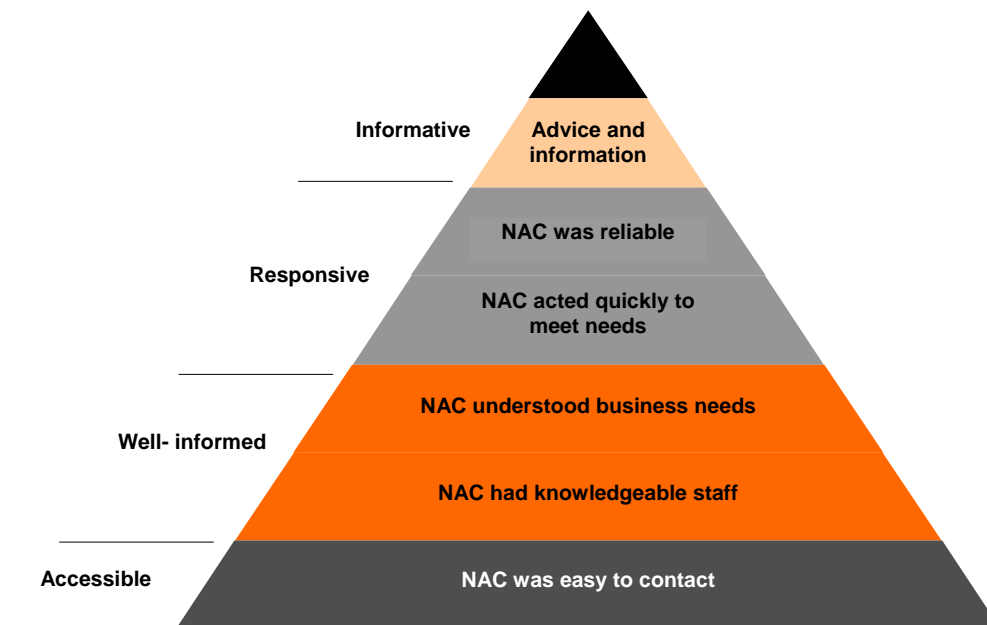
3.1.3 Main Drivers of Employer Satisfaction with New Apprentices

Analysis of the relationship between overall satisfaction and various aspects of customer service identified those aspects of service most strongly associated with overall satisfaction. Regression analysis² based on the data from all NACs was used to identify the main drivers of employers' overall satisfaction with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre and their relative importance.

This analysis identified six customer service attributes that 'drive' employers' overall satisfaction with the services provided by New Apprenticeships Centres (Figure 3). Of these, the service attribute most highly associated with overall satisfaction was that of being 'informative' - as indicated by the proportion of employers' satisfied with the 'information or advice' provided by their NAC. Other important service attributes included the provision of 'reliable' and 'responsive' service, the requirement that their 'NAC understood their business needs' and had 'knowledgeable staff' and that their NAC was 'easy to contact'.

These results can be summarised into four dimensions creating a 'customer service model' for New Apprenticeships Centres in terms of service delivery to employers. Essentially, employers want a service relationship with their respective NACs that is **informative, responsive, well-informed** and **accessible**.

Figure 3 : Main drivers of overall satisfaction for employers



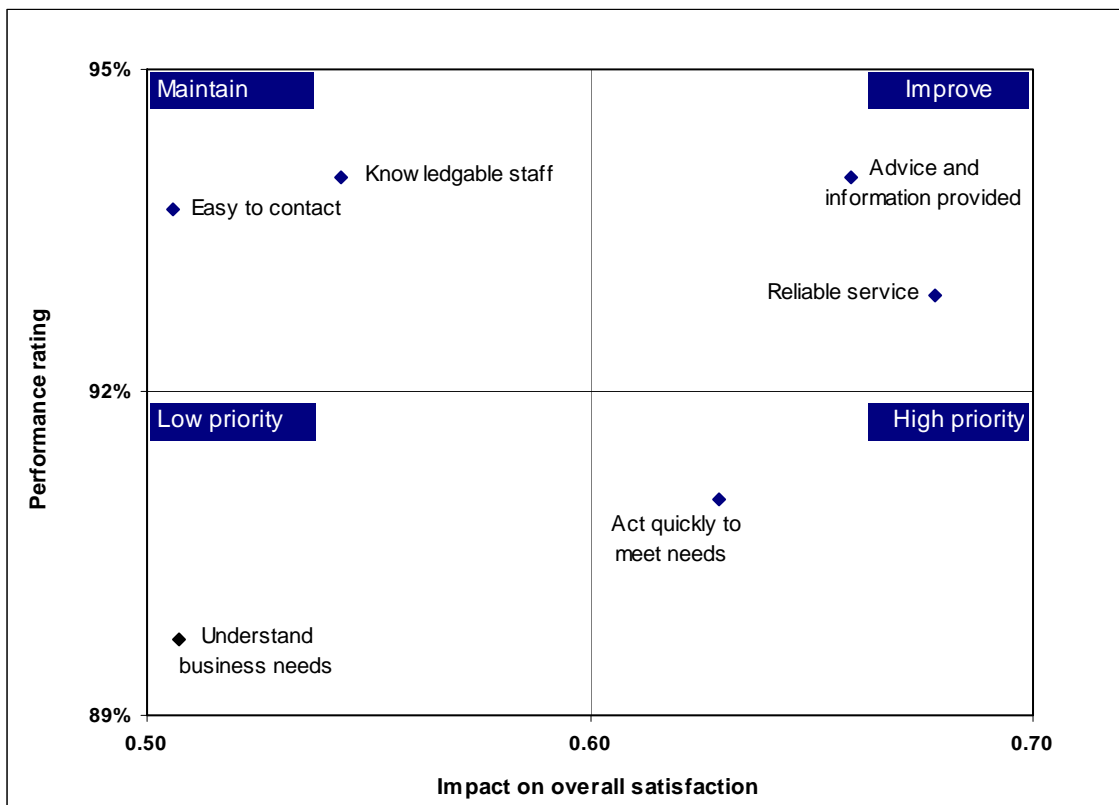
² Regression analysis is a statistical technique that quantifies the relationship between overall satisfaction and the aspects of customer service that affect it. The approach allows identification of the most important factors and a ranking of aspects according to their importance in terms of their influence on overall satisfaction.

The correlation of each of these attributes to overall satisfaction can also be used to identify aspects of service which, if improved, would have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction.

The scatter diagram below (Figure 4) shows the average proportion of customers that rated a specific element of NAC service as either “good” or “very good” and plots this result against overall satisfaction. Typically these charts are divided into quadrants to identify the service attributes to focus on.

Based on this analysis, the service attribute that falls into the high priority quadrant is that of ‘acting quickly to meet employer needs’. This suggests that it is this aspect of service delivery that NACs need to focus on more so than any other in order to maintain or improve the current high levels of employer satisfaction. Continuing to provide a ‘reliable’ service will also prove important in maintaining and improving overall satisfaction.

Figure 4 : Impact of service attributes on employer overall satisfaction

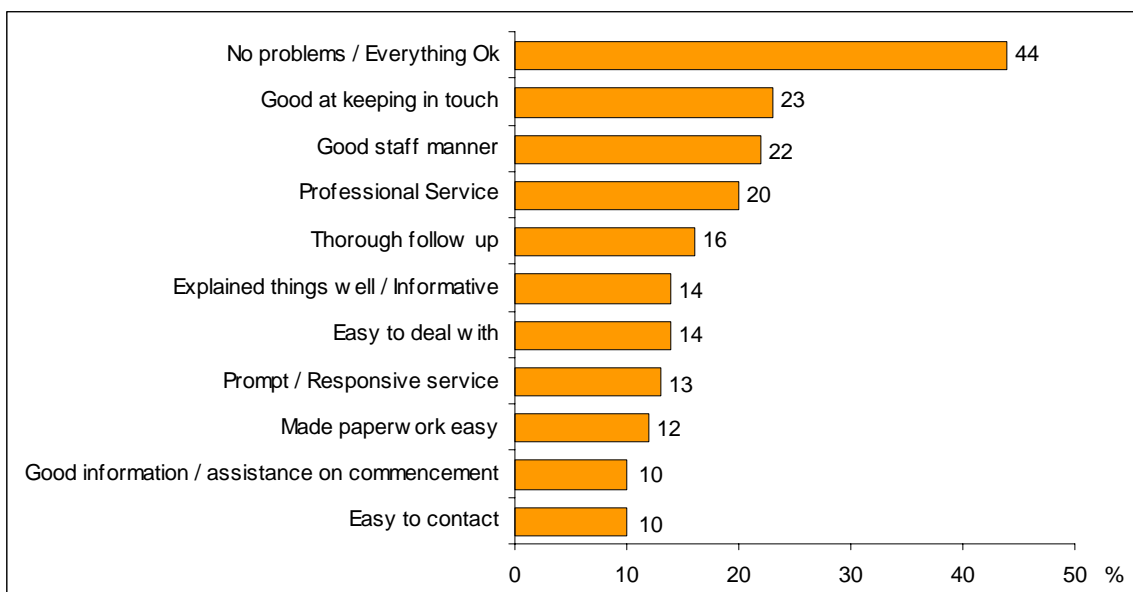


3.1.4 Reasons for Satisfaction / Dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres

The reasons given by employers for being satisfied or dissatisfied with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre are provided in Figures 5 and 6.

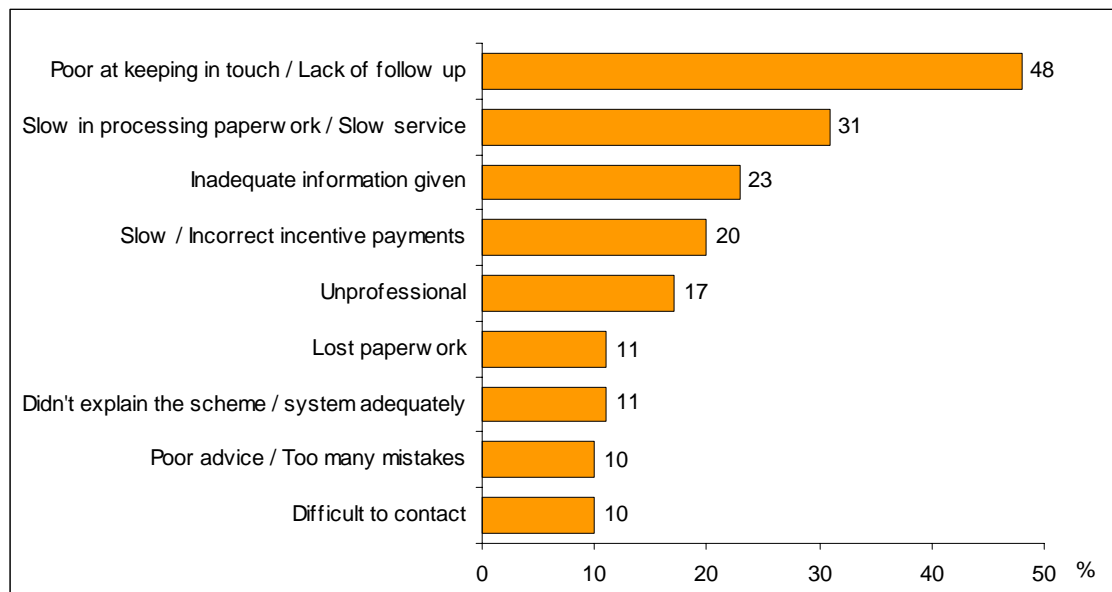
Looking at reasons for satisfaction first (Figure 5), employers cited the absence of any problems (44%), the perception that their NAC was good at keeping in touch (23%), had good staff manner (22%) and provided professional service (20%) as the major reasons for being satisfied with the services provided by their NAC. Thus it is the *manner* of service delivery as much as the *content* of the service that is important in shaping employers' overall views.

Figure 5 : Reasons given by employers for satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres



Base: Total Satisfied (n=5022).
Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The most frequent reason for dissatisfaction noted by employers (Figure 6) was a perceived lack of 'follow up / proactive service', as mentioned by 48% of dissatisfied employers (3.6% of employers overall). Other commonly cited reasons for employer dissatisfaction with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre included 'slow service / slow in processing paperwork', 'inadequate information' given, 'slow or incorrect incentive payments' and a perceived 'lack of professionalism'.

Figure 6 : Reasons given by employers for dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres

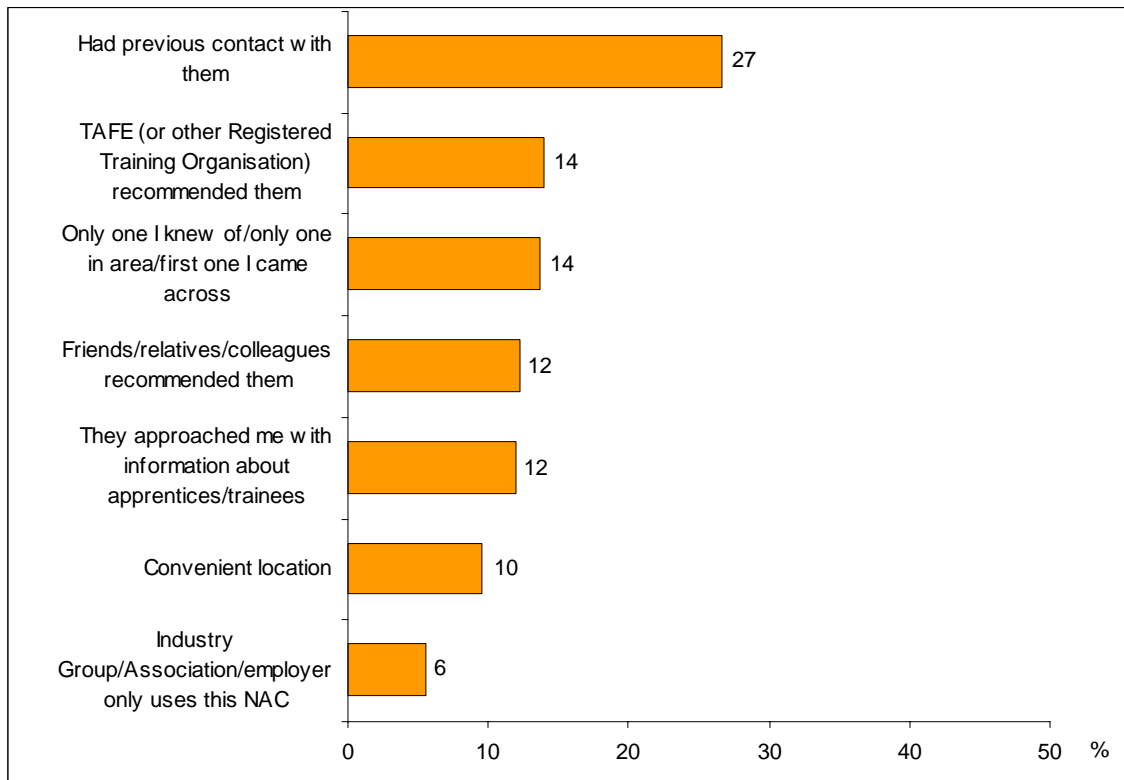
Base: Total Dissatisfied (n=493).
Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The reasons given by employers for being satisfied or dissatisfied with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre are largely consistent with drivers of satisfaction, as identified in Section 3.1.3. These results provide New Apprenticeships Centres with indicators of which areas of service delivery to employers need improvement.

3.1.5 Reasons for Choice of NAC

The main reason given by employers for choosing a particular NAC was 'previous contact', as mentioned by 27% of employers (Figure 7). Other factors shaping employers' choice of NAC include recommendations (14% from TAFEs / RTOs and 12% from colleagues / friends), a perceived lack of choice (only one I knew of / first one I came across – 14%), being approached by the NAC themselves (12%) and convenience of location (10%).

Figure 7 : Reasons given for choice of New Apprenticeships Centre



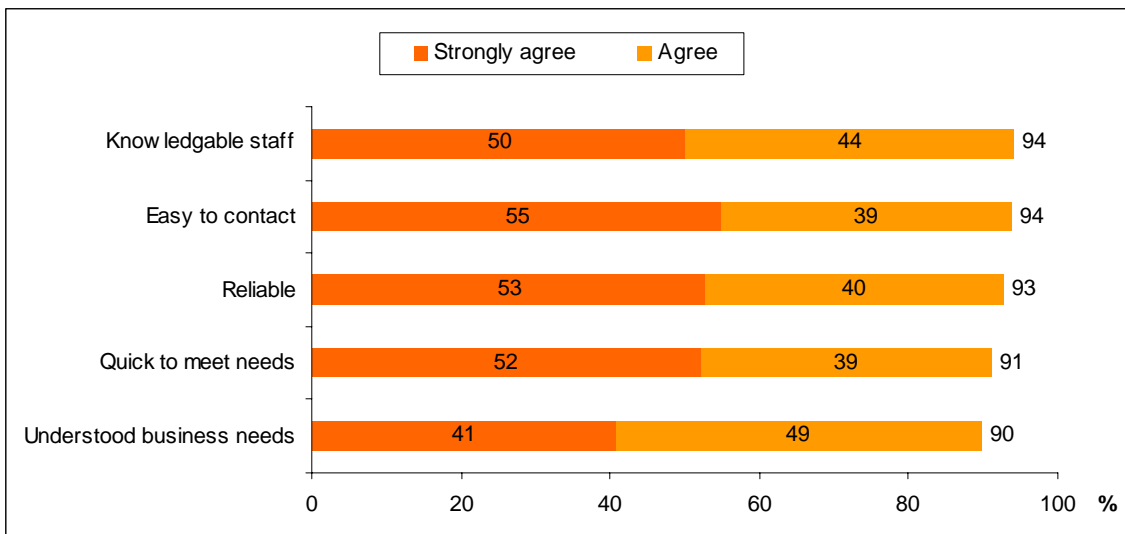
Base: Total Sample (n = 5687).

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

3.2 Selected Aspects of Customer Service

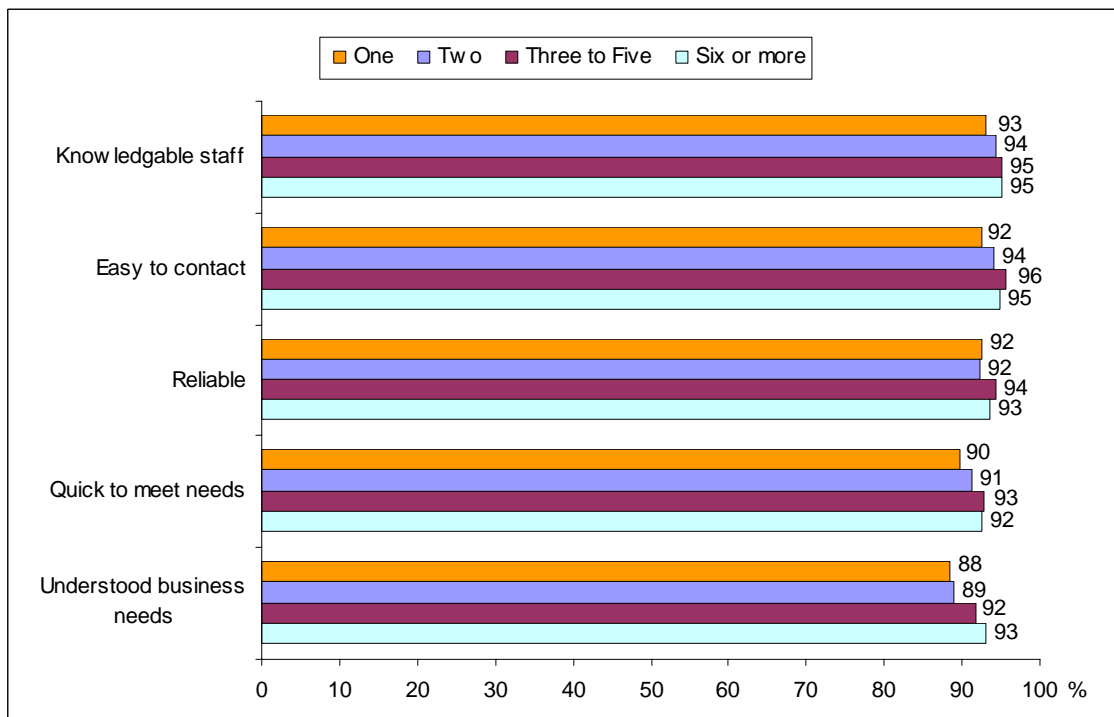
Employers were asked their level of agreement / disagreement with a series of statements regarding dimensions of customer service with a view to seeing how NACs perform in respect of a range of important aspects of customer service (i.e. having knowledgeable staff, being easy to contact, being reliable, being quick to meet needs and understanding business needs). Figure 8 shows ratings of 90% or higher in respect of each of these aspects of customer service with Figure 9 showing a slight variation in these results based on the number of New Apprentices employed.

Figure 8 : Percentage agreement with selected statements about customer service



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

Figure 9 : Aspects of customer service by number of Apprentices employed



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

3.3 Information Content and Delivery

3.3.1 Information Content

In terms of the content of the information provided to employers by New Apprenticeships Centres, reference to Figure 10 shows that employers were most likely to recall receiving information from their New Apprenticeships Centre about 'incentives and allowances' (94%) and their 'rights and obligations' (91%), closely followed by their 'roles and responsibilities' under New Apprenticeships training contracts (88%).

At the other end of the scale, just over half the employers surveyed (51%) recalled being provided with information or advice on 'how to adapt training to meet their needs' and less than half (48% and 44% respectively) recalled being provided with information about the 'financial assistance available' when employing Indigenous Australians or people with a disability as New Apprentices.

Figure 10 : Types of information and advice received from New Apprenticeships Centre



Base: Total Sample (n=5687).

The proportion of employers that reported receiving information on each of the topics mentioned above varied considerably by region and size of employer. Employers in areas other than the main capital cities were more likely to report receiving information on almost all of the information topics shown in Figure 10.

Employers in Victoria were less likely than those in other states to report they received information on roles and responsibilities (83%). The receipt of information regarding the role of the State Training Authority was most likely to be mentioned by employers in Queensland (75%) and least likely to be mentioned in South Australia (45%), Victoria (49%) and ACT (52%). Employers in Queensland and Tasmania were more likely than those in other states to report receiving information on how to adapt training and on how training is delivered.

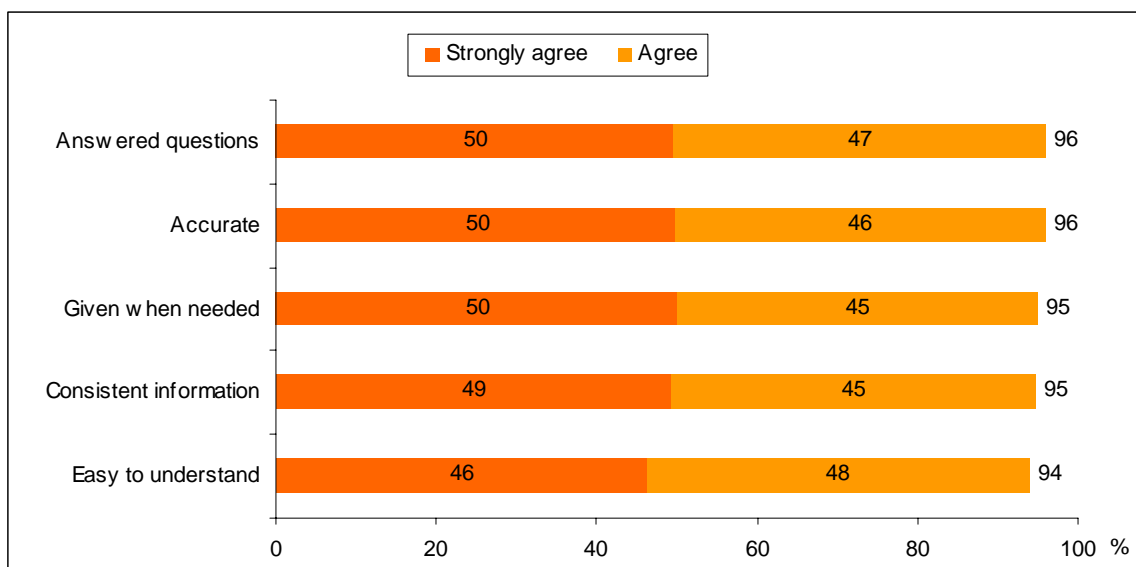
As previously noted, at a national level only 48% of employers reported receiving information about employing Indigenous persons. This proportion increased to 60% in the Northern Territory and 66% in companies employing more than 500 people.

The receipt of information regarding employing people with a disability was reported most by employers in Queensland (51%) and Tasmania (48%) and by large employers (67%).

3.3.2 Information Quality

In addition to the content of the information provided, employers were also asked their impressions regarding the *quality* of the information provided by NACs incorporating aspects of information delivery such as accuracy, consistency, perceived relevance and timeliness. The results, all of which are very high, are shown in Figure 11.

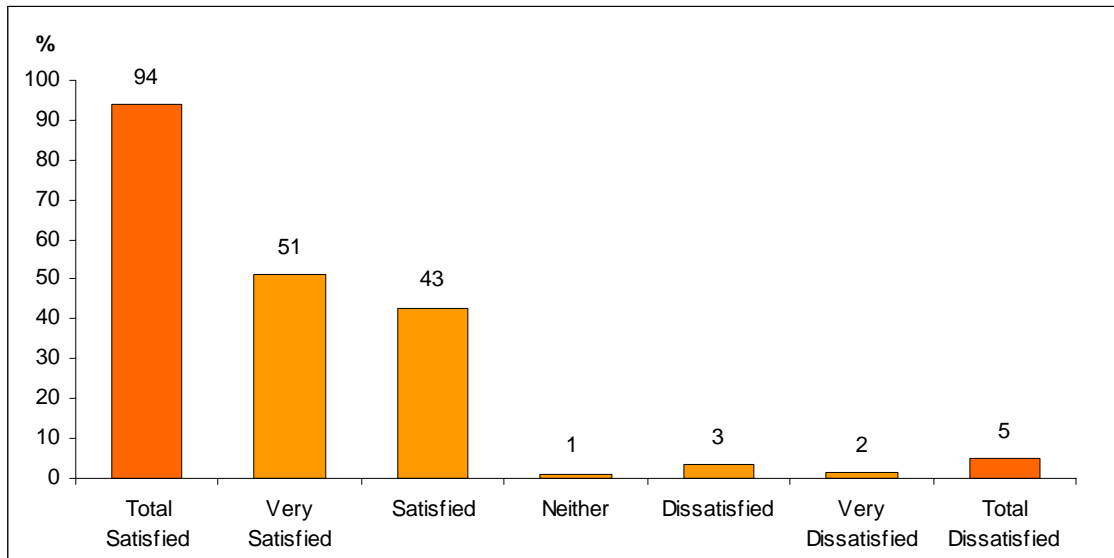
Figure 11 : Percentage agreement with statements about selected attributes of information quality provided by New Apprenticeships Centre



Base: Those who have had information or advice from NAC (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

Given the high ratings achieved in terms of information content and delivery, employers' overall satisfaction with the information and advice provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre was also very high (94%), with just over half being very satisfied (51%).

Figure 12 : Percentage of employers satisfied with information or advice provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre



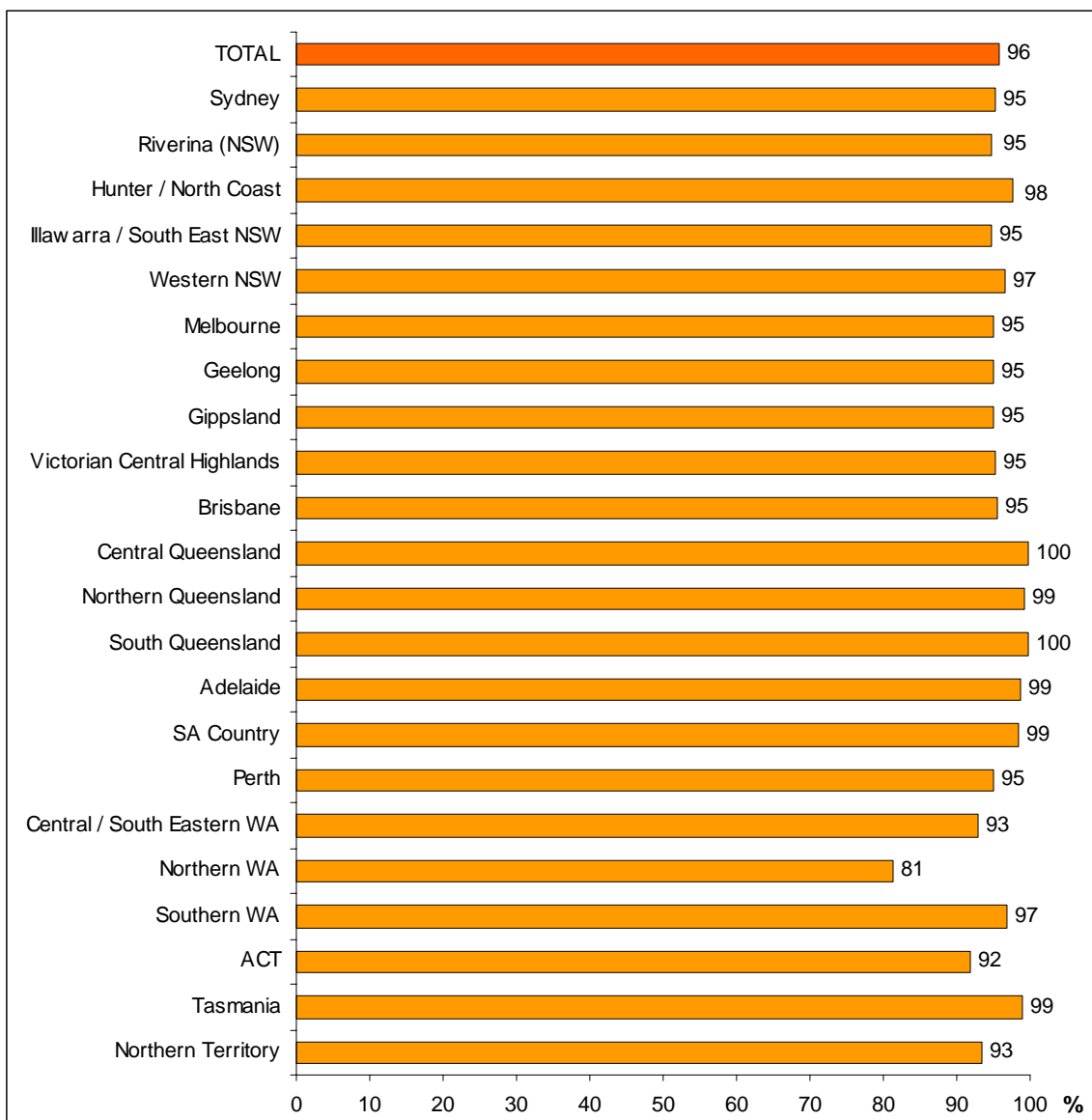
Base: Those who have had information or advice from NAC (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5608).

3.4 Signing Up New Apprentices and Receiving Incentive Payments

3.4.1 Signing Up New Apprentices

Fifty one percent of employers interviewed had a New Apprentice or Trainee commence in the six months prior to being interviewed and, as such, were asked a series of questions about the sign up process and the role of their New Apprenticeships Centre in this process. Of these employers, 96% agreed their NAC made the sign up process as simple as possible (Figure 13). This result was achieved despite the finding that over a third of employers with a new commencement (34%) needed help or assistance in completing some aspect of the associated paperwork. Employers in NSW and Victoria were the most likely to report needing help with the 'sign up' paperwork (37% each). The results for the Northern WA region were considerably lower than those achieved in all other regions³.

Figure 13 : Percentage agreeing that their New Apprenticeships Centre was able to make the sign up process simple

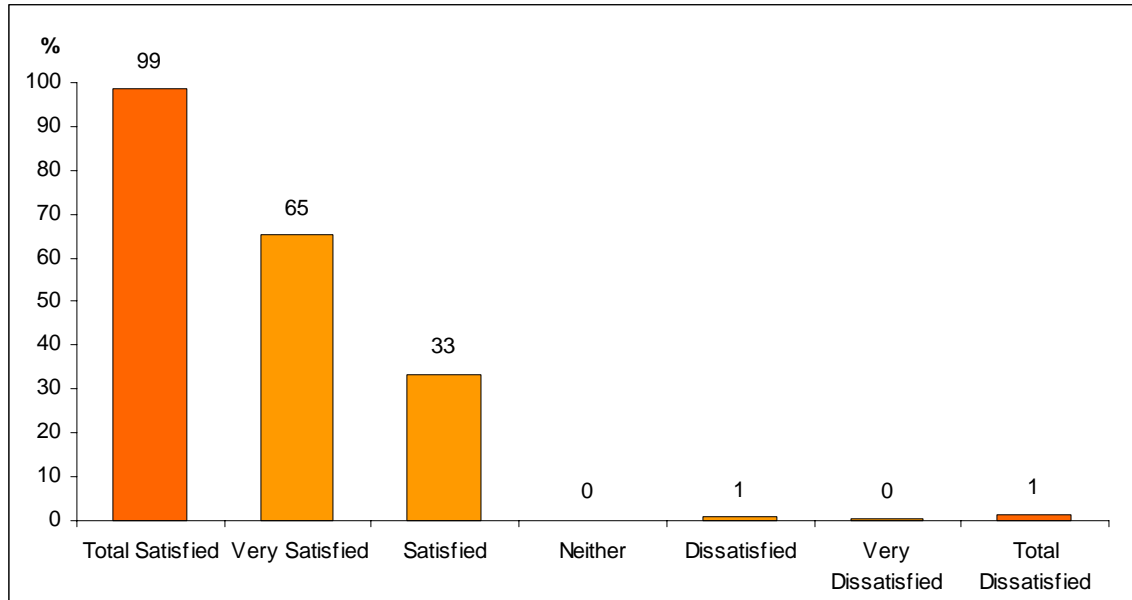


Base: Had New Apprentice / Trainee commence in previous 6 months (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses).

³ Note: Based on a sample (n = 31)

Figure 14 shows almost universal satisfaction amongst employers with the assistance provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre in completing the 'sign-up' paperwork (99% satisfied). Large employers tended to be somewhat less satisfied (at 94%).

Figure 14 : Percentage of employers satisfied with assistance to complete 'sign-up' paperwork

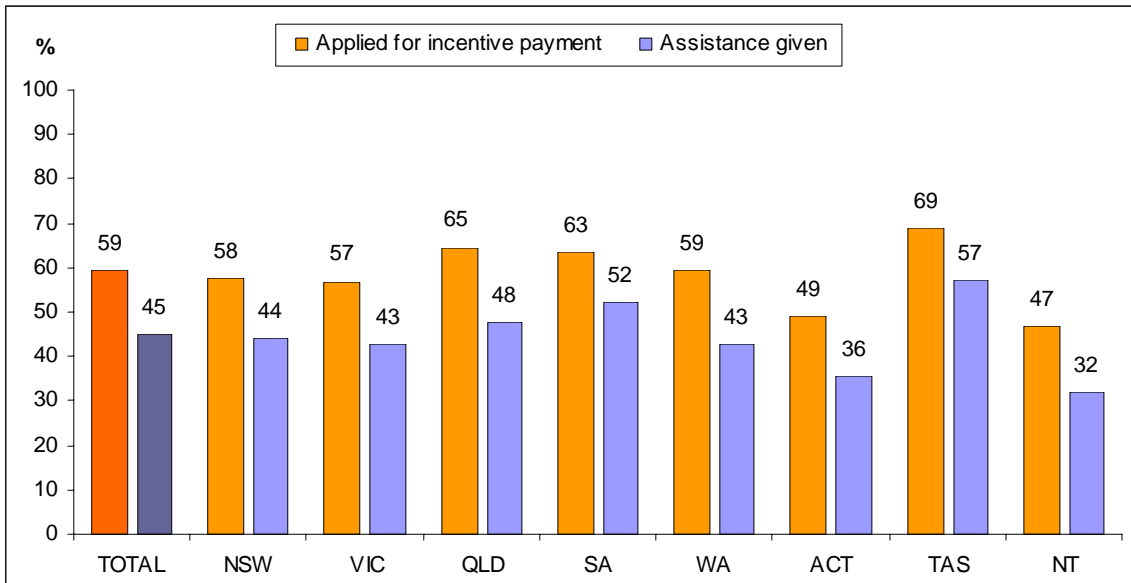


Base: Had New Apprentice or Trainee commence in previous six months (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 4792).

3.4.2 Incentive Payments

Fifty nine percent of employers had applied for incentive payments, of whom 67% (45% of all employers) received help from their NAC with the application process (Figure 15). The rate at which employers received help from their NAC with the incentive payment application process varied considerably across the States and Territories ranging from 61% in the Northern Territory to 78% in Tasmania.

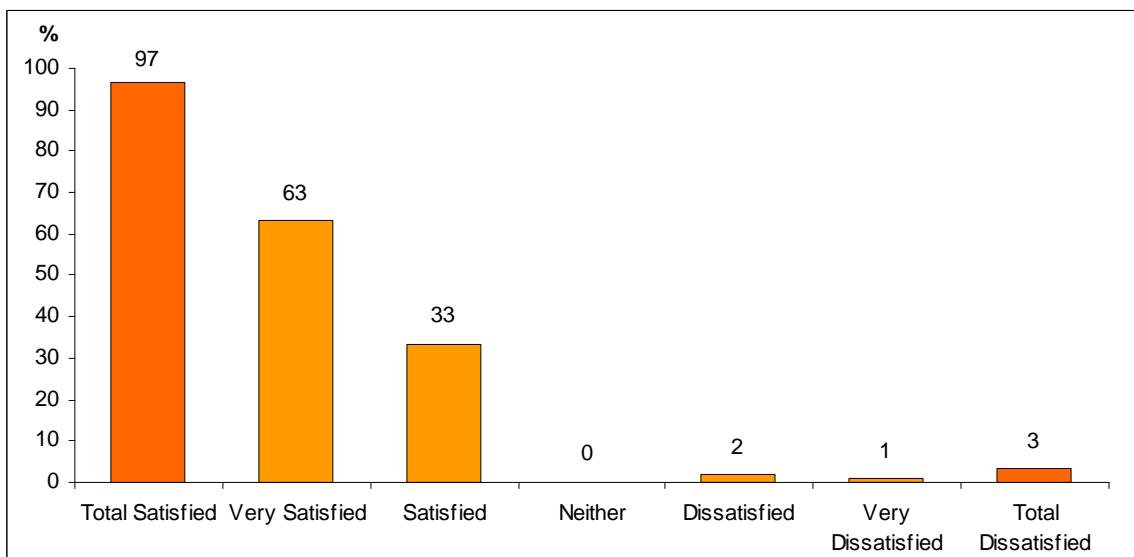
Figure 15 : Proportion of employers applying for an incentive payment and proportion receiving assistance by State



Base: *Applied for incentive payment*: Total Sample (n=5687). *Assistance given*: Applied for incentive payment (n=3784).

The majority (63%) were 'very satisfied' with the assistance provided (Figure 16). Satisfaction with the assistance provided was similar across the various types and locations of employers, even though numbers of employers applying varied considerably by location and company size.

Figure 16 : Percentage of employers satisfied with assistance to apply for an incentive



Base: Received assistance from NAC when applying for incentives (excluding *Don't Know* responses) (n=2578).

3.5 Follow Up Contact and Complaints Handling

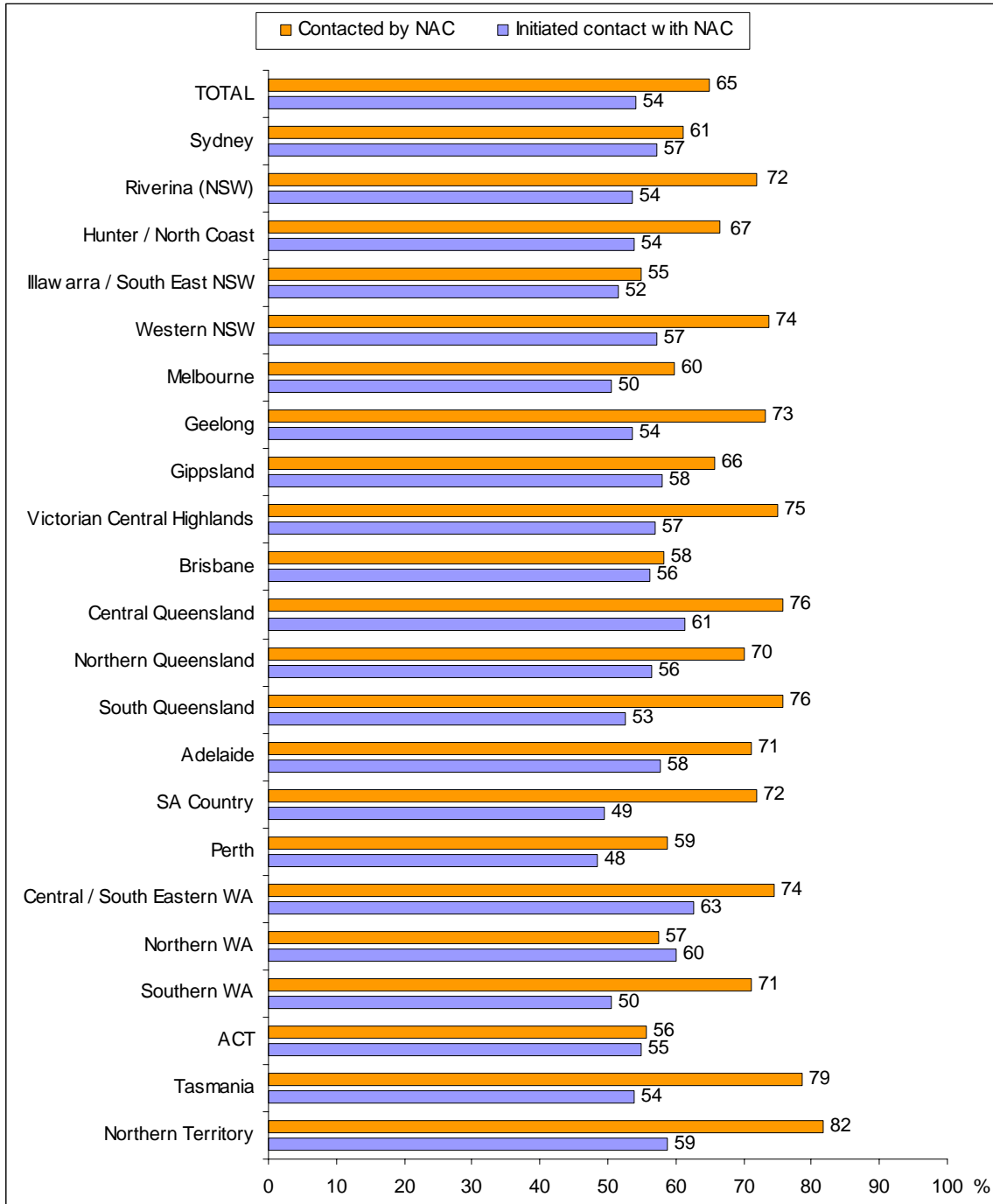
3.5.1 Follow Up Contact

Sixty five percent of employers that had a New Apprentice or Trainee commence in the previous six months recalled being contacted by the NAC responsible for that placement during that time and 54% of all respondents had initiated contact with their NAC over the same period. Figure 17 shows the level of contact between NACs and employers at the regional level. Employers in the Northern Territory and Tasmania (82% and 79% respectively) were the most likely to have been contacted by their NAC. The higher level of NAC initiated contact in the Northern Territory reflects the contact regime in place in the Northern Territory whereby a NAC representative is required not only to be present at sign up and to make contact with the employer and New Apprentice within one month of the six month point of the New Apprenticeship but also to undertake a visit every six months for the duration of the New Apprenticeship.

The survey results show the existence of a relationship between NAC initiated contact levels and employer satisfaction in that 95% of employers that were contacted by their NAC in the previous six months were, on-the-whole, satisfied with the services provided by their NAC compared with an overall satisfaction level 85% amongst employers that had not been contacted by their NAC in the previous six months.

This apparent relationship between proactive contact by NACs and employer satisfaction is further demonstrated in the results presented earlier (Figure 5, p12.) showing that almost a quarter of employers (23%) cite the fact that their NAC was 'good at keeping in touch' as a reason for being satisfied with NACs services.

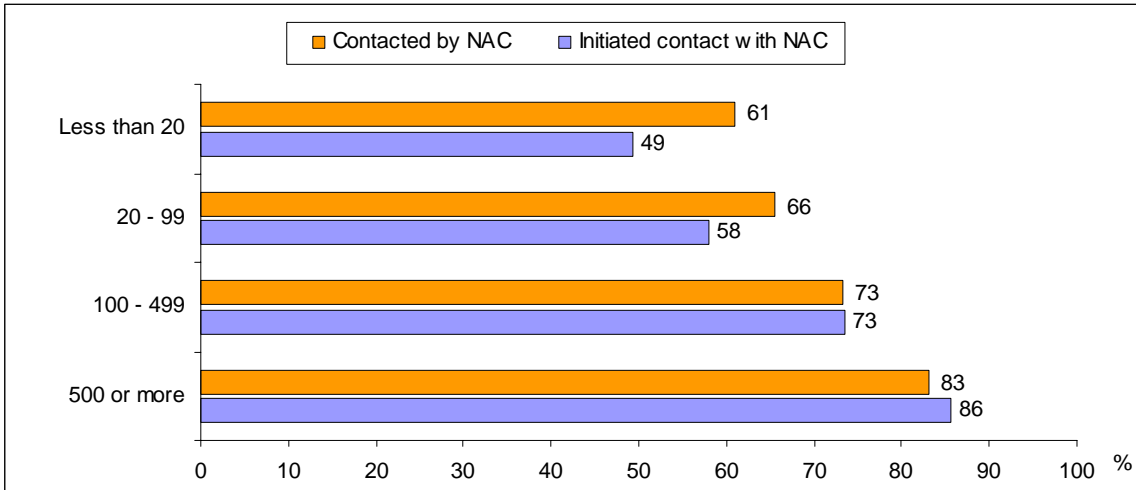
Figure 17 : Percentages contacted or initiating contact by region



Base: *Contacted by NAC*: New Apprentice/trainee commenced in previous six months (n=2865). *Made contact with NAC*: Total sample (n=5687).

Larger employers were more likely to be contacted and to initiate contact than smaller ones, as shown below. In particular, 49% of employers with less than 20 employees initiated contact with their NAC.

Figure 18 : Contact with New Apprenticeships Centre by employer size

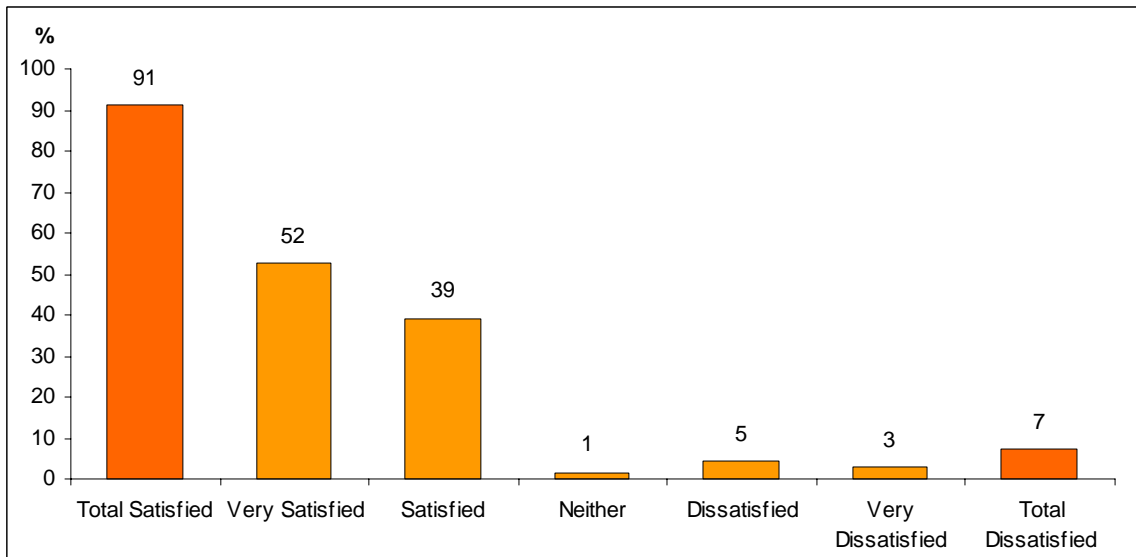


Base: *Contacted by NAC*: Those who had New Apprentice or trainee commence in previous six months (n=2928).
Made contact with NAC; Total sample (n=5687).

Employers in the Northern Territory that contacted their NAC after taking on a New Apprentice were asked why they did so. Two in five contacted their NAC for information about training and just over a third wanted help with a problem regarding their New Apprentice. Eleven percent of employers wanted help with a problem with the training provider and 9% were following up about payments or appointments.

Figure 19 shows employers' overall satisfaction with the contact they had with their NAC. Nationally, 91% of employers were satisfied with the contact they had with an NAC. Satisfaction levels were higher amongst larger employers.

Figure 19 : Overall satisfaction with contact by New Apprenticeships Centre



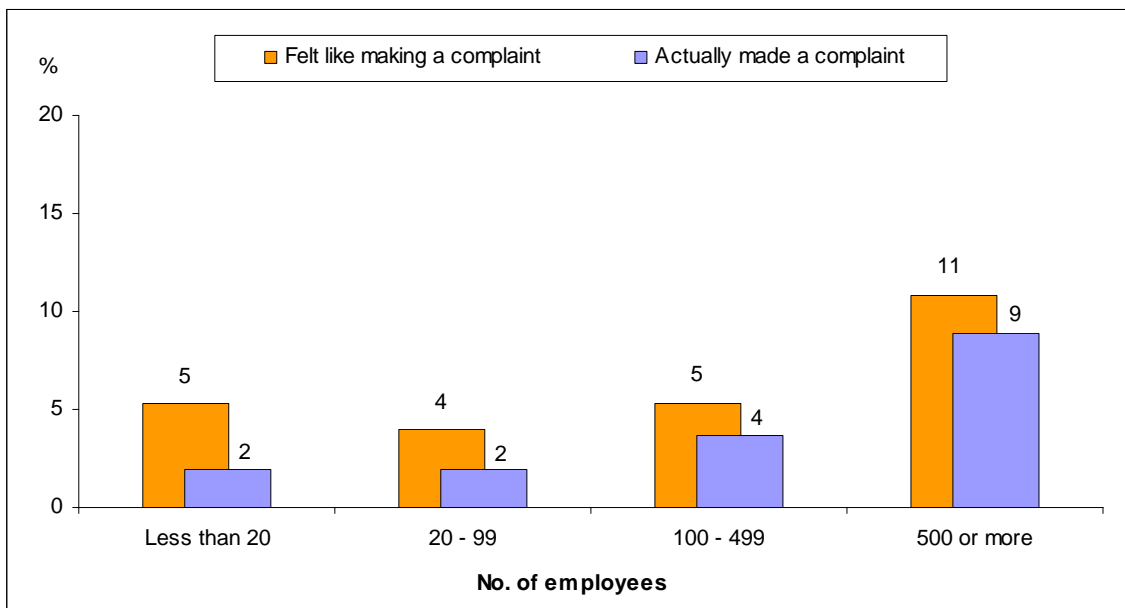
Base: Those who have made contact with NAC in last 6 months (excluding *Don't Know* responses) (n=3669).

3.5.2 Complaints Handling

Five percent of employers reported feeling like making a complaint about their NAC and 44% of those employers (2% of the population) actually went on to make a complaint.

As shown in Figure 20, large employers are most likely to have felt like making a complaint and also to follow through with that complaint. Less than half of the small employers who felt like making a complaint actually went on to make one. Employers who had a New Apprentice start in the last six months are also more likely to make a complaint.

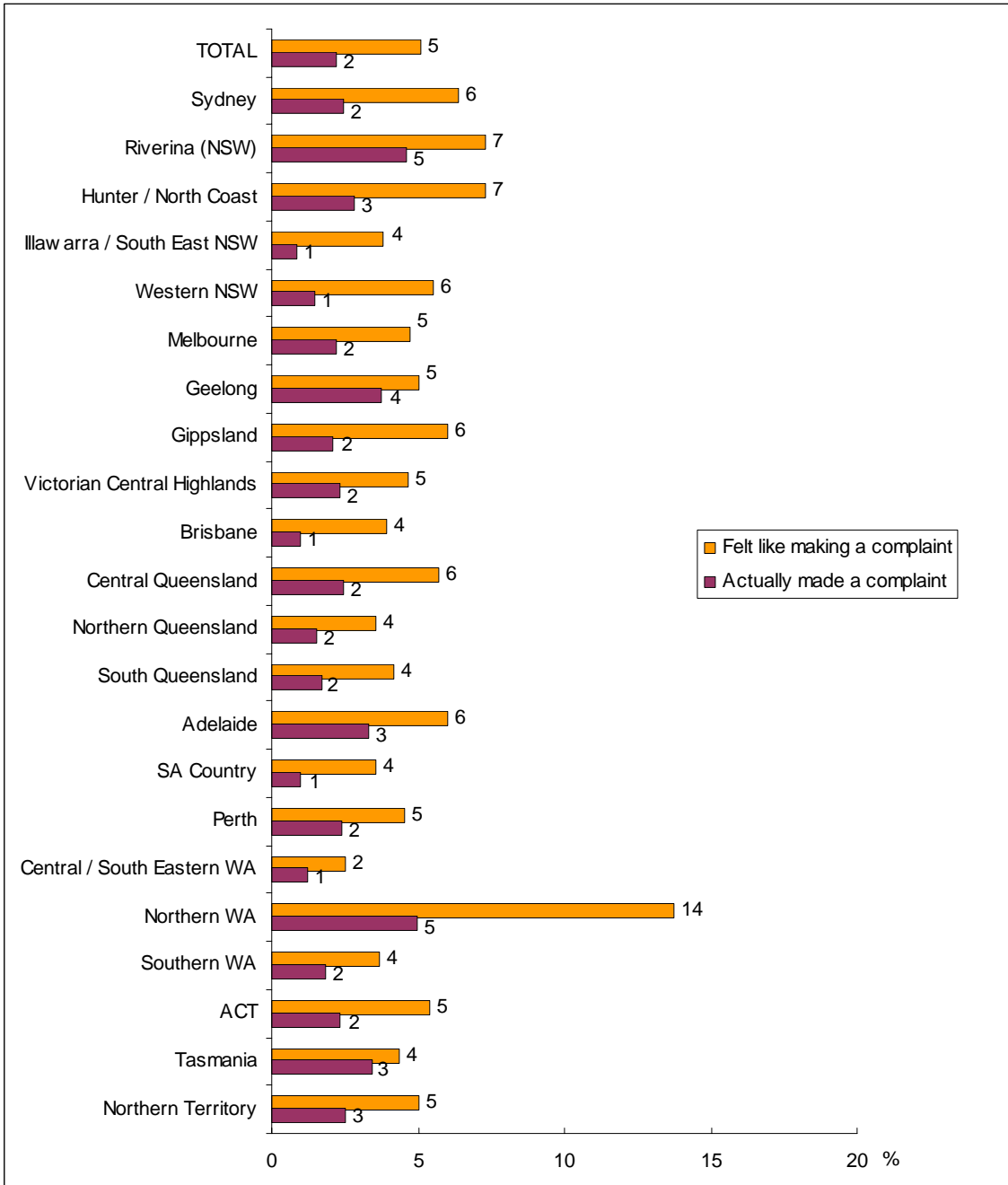
Figure 20 : Percentage of employers who felt like making a complaint and actually did by employer size



Base: *Felt like making a complaint*: Total Sample (n=5687). *Actually made a complaint*: Wanted to complain (n=304).

In Figure 21 (next page), issues in the Northern WA region are again evident with more than twice the employers than any other region reporting having wanted to make a complaint.

Figure 21 : Percentage of employers who complained by region



Base: Total Sample (n=5687).

Of the employers who did actually make a complaint, the vast majority (83%) complained to the NAC with most others complaining to DEST. Of those who did complain to the NAC, 6% also complained to the TAFE or RTO and 6% complained to the local member. For those who reported complaining to DEST, 75% reported being satisfied with the way the complaint was handled compared to the overall level of satisfaction with complaints handling of 64%. For those who complained to their NAC directly, satisfaction with complaints handling was 63%. The main reason given for dissatisfaction with the way complaints were handled was that no outcome or resolution was achieved (81%). Thirty five percent of employers also reported poor communication as a reason for dissatisfaction with complaints handling.

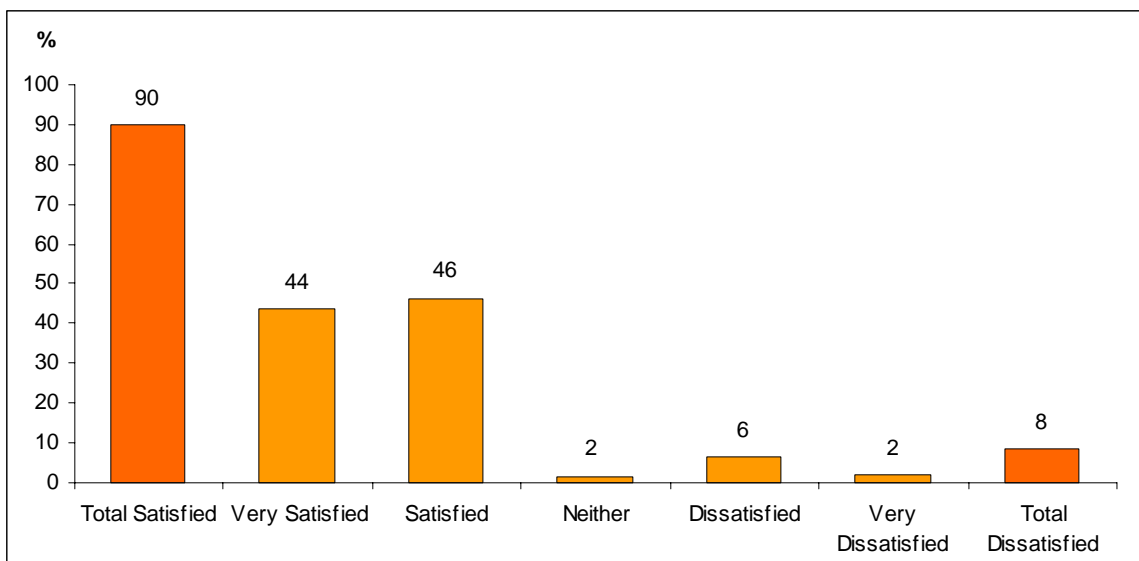
3.6 Overall Impressions of New Apprenticeships

3.6.1 Overall Satisfaction

When asked to consider all aspects of New Apprenticeships, 90% of employers reported being satisfied (43.6% very satisfied and 46.2% satisfied) (Figure 22).

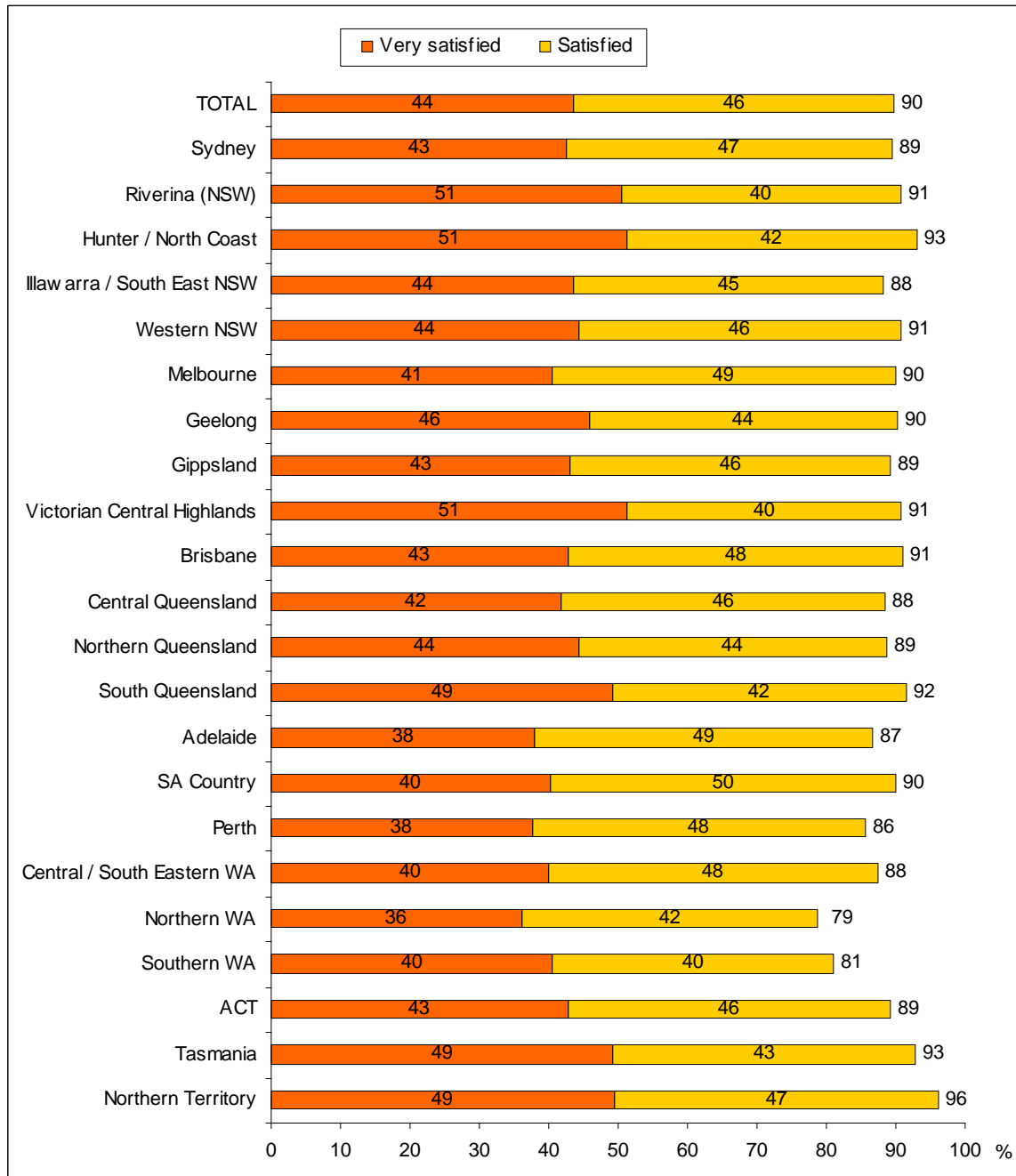
No significant differences were observed by employer characteristics except that the employers in the Northern WA region were again the least satisfied (79%), with satisfaction levels also relatively low in Southern WA (81%). The regional results are shown in Figure 23.

Figure 22 : Overall satisfaction with New Apprenticeships



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5665).

Figure 23 : Overall satisfaction with New Apprenticeships by region



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n=5665).

Amongst those satisfied with New Apprenticeships, over half (52%) reported that they had no problems or that the system and structure generally work well. Twenty four percent of satisfied employers also reported that they received good service. Training was also cited by a number of employers as a reason for their satisfaction with the system with 14% mentioning the overall relevance of the training, 14% mentioning the quality of the training and 11% mentioning the ease of organising the training (refer to Figure 24 on next page).

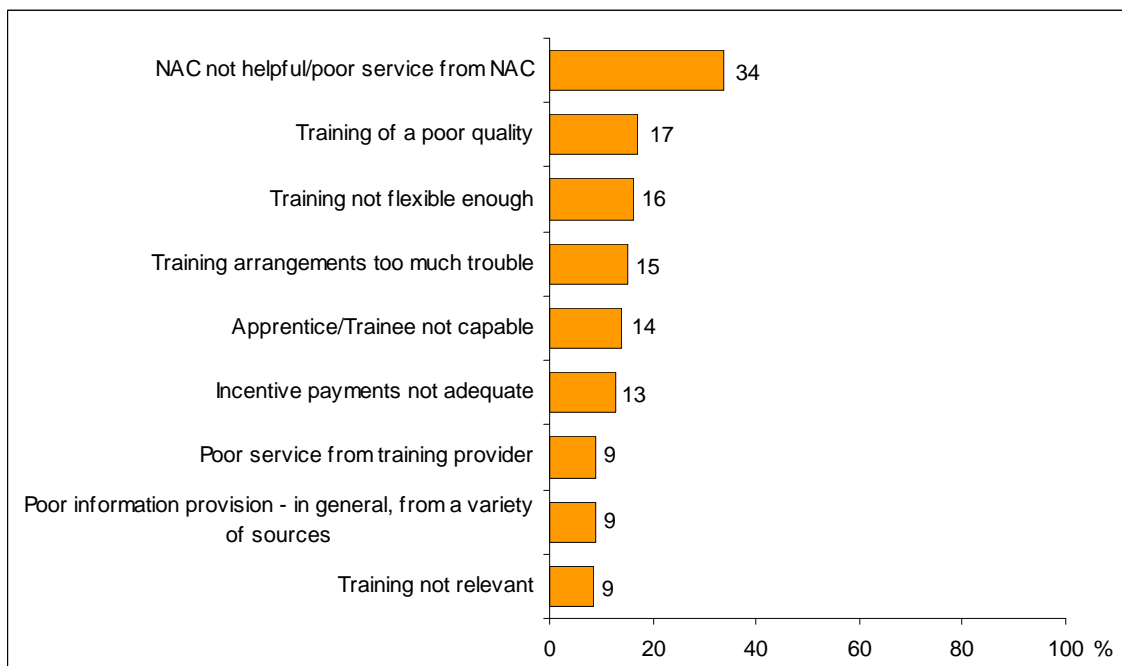
Figure 24 : Reasons for satisfaction with New Apprenticeships



Base: Total satisfied (n = 5027).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The most common reason given for dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships related to NAC service (34%) however various issues relating to training were mentioned by nearly half of those dissatisfied with New Apprenticeships (47%).

Figure 25 : Reasons for dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships

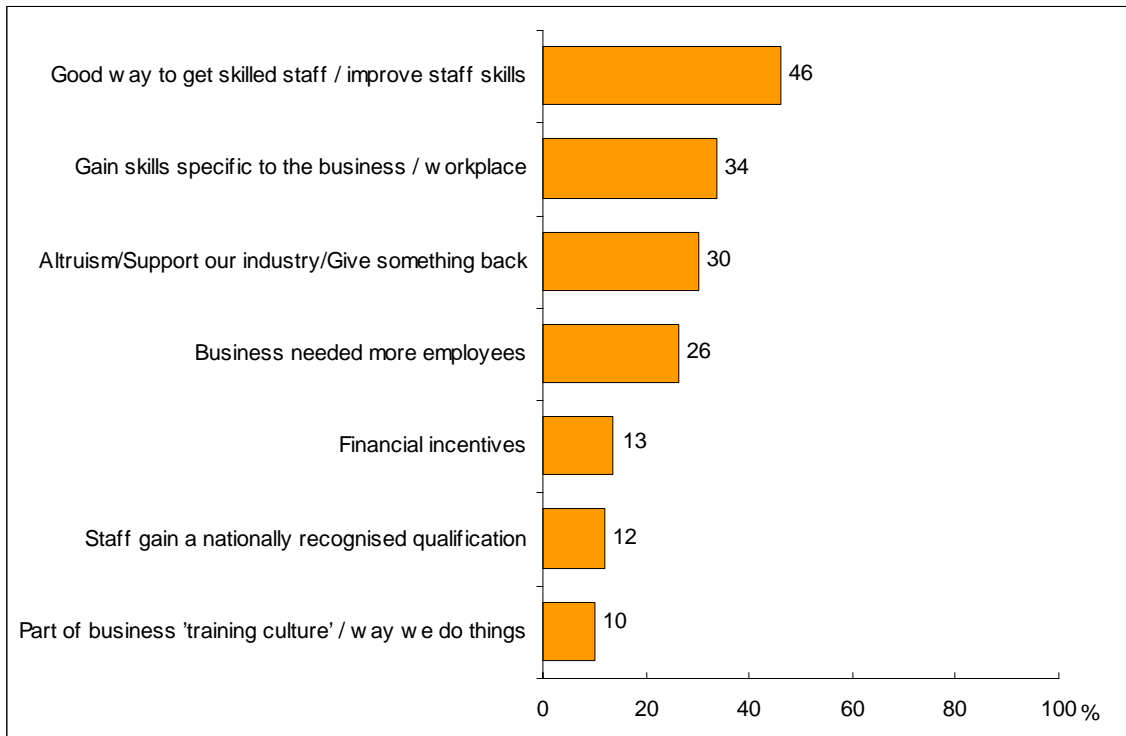


Base: Total dissatisfied (n = 509).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

3.6.2 Reasons for Hiring New Apprentices and the Role of Financial Incentives

Employers were asked to put forward the most important reasons for employing New Apprentices. A breakdown of the responses is provided in Figure 26 and shows the main factors driving employers' employment decisions with respect to New Apprentices relate to skills acquisition, altruism, overall staffing needs and the availability of incentives.

Figure 26 : Reasons for employing apprentices / trainees

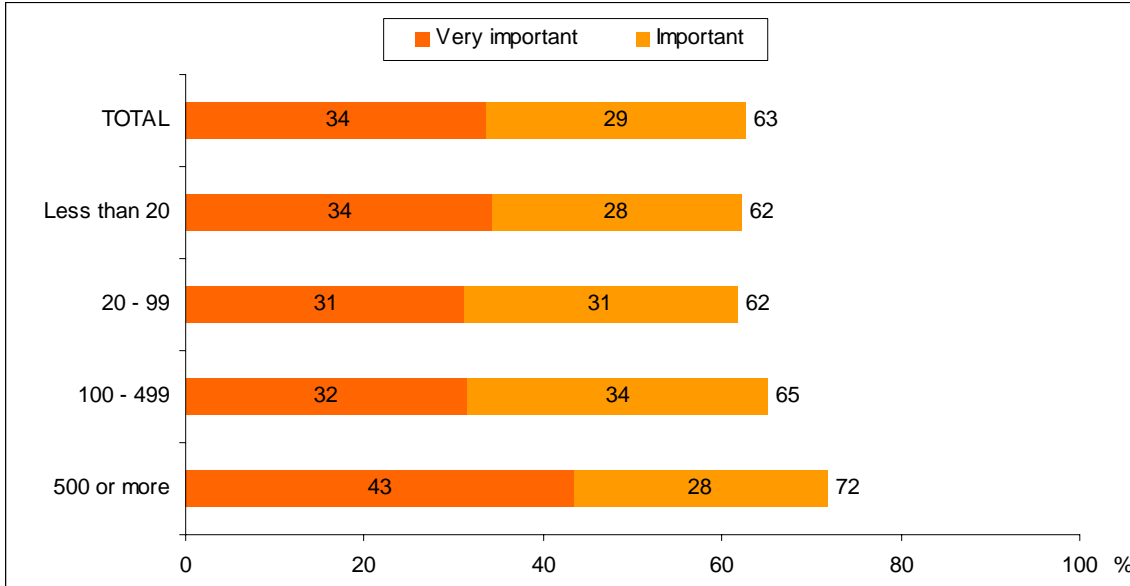


Base: Total Sample (n = 5687).

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

When asked specifically about the importance of incentives nearly two in three employers (63%) reported feeling that incentives were an important factor in the decision to employ a New Apprentice. This was particularly the case amongst large employers.

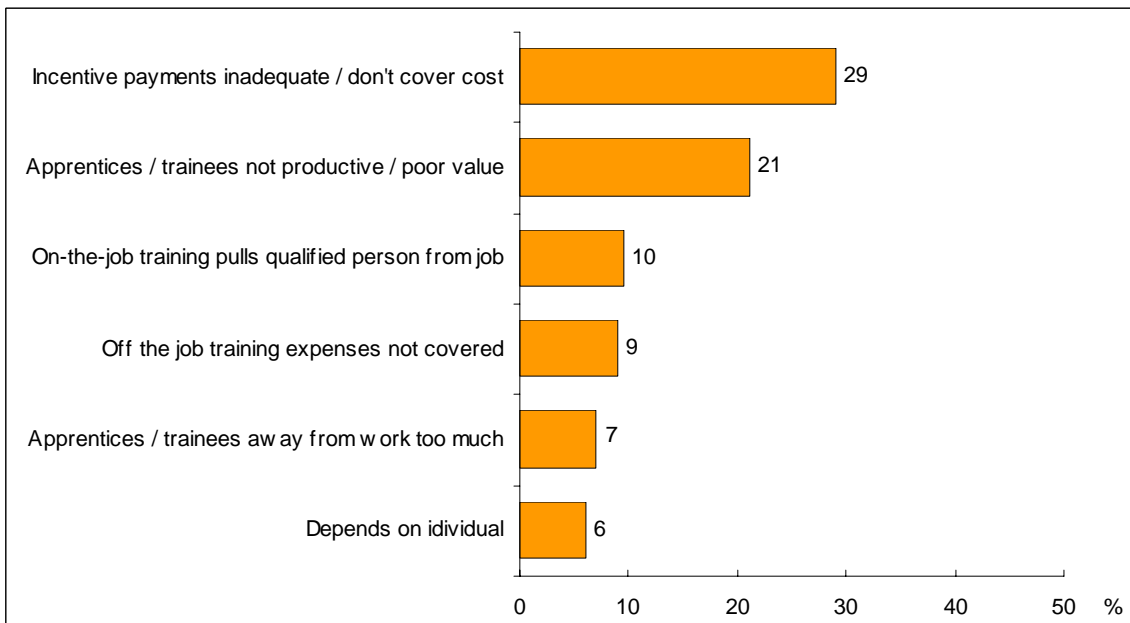
Figure 27 : Importance of incentives by employer size



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses and refusals) (n = 5619).

Almost four in five employers (78%) reported agreement that the lower wage paid to New Apprentices adequately compensated for the lower skills base that New Apprentices start with. Of these who do not think that this was the case, 29% reported that the incentive payments are not adequate and don't cover costs. One in five employers who did not feel adequately compensated felt that new Apprentices were poor value or that they were not productive.

Figure 28 : Reasons for thinking that lower wage does not compensate for lower skill



Base: Those who think wage does not compensate (n = 865).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

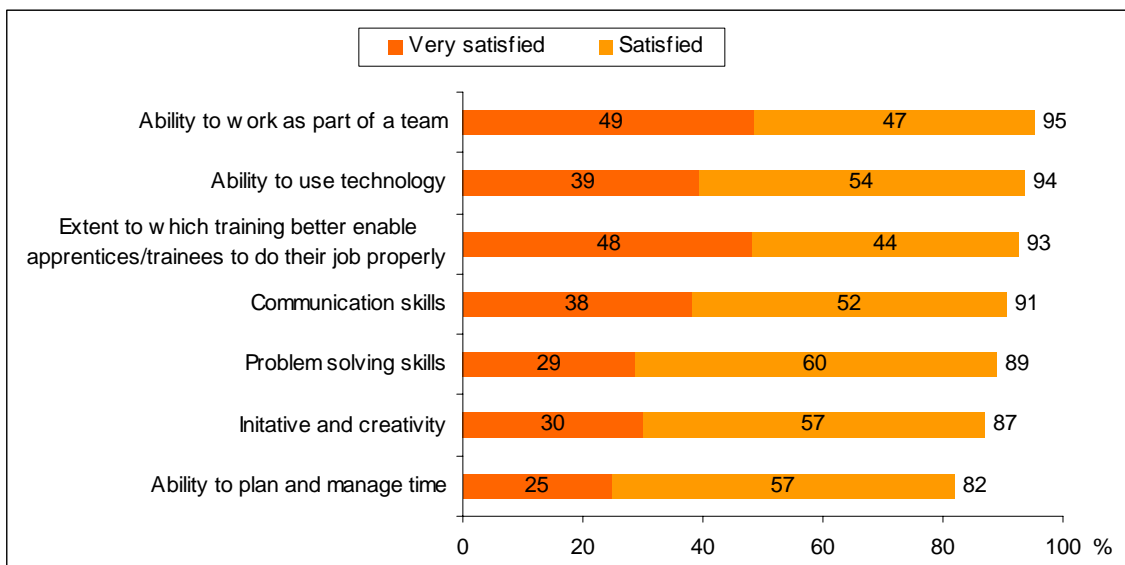
3.6.3 Perceptions of New Apprentices' Training

Employers' perceptions regarding the impact of New Apprenticeships training were measured by ascertaining the level of agreement with a series of statements focusing on certain aspects of training. The results are provided in Figure 29 and show the most favourable impressions held by employers with respect to the impact of New Apprenticeships training related to teamwork and the functional aspects of job performance (i.e. ability to use technology and ability to improve their job properly). While still high, employers impressions of what might be termed the managerial or supervisory aspects of New Apprenticeships training, such as time management, initiative and creativity and problem solving, were less positive.

Eighty six percent of employers felt that the amount of time New Apprentices spend away from the workplace for training purposes was about right and one in 10 felt that the time away from the workplace was excessive. Just over three quarters (76%) of the employers reported wanting to be able to decide themselves when New Apprentices are ready to be fast tracked through the system. Employers in Queensland and South Australia were most likely to want to make this decision, as were large employers.

The great majority of employers (86%) were of the view that training makes New Apprentices more employable.

Figure 29 : Employers' perceptions regarding various aspects of New Apprentices' training



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say / Not applicable* responses).

3.6.4 Future Use Intentions and Willingness to Recommend

Table 3 (next page) provides a breakdown of intended future use of New Apprenticeships and willingness to use the same NAC again by region and various employer characteristics.

Larger employers, those in the Northern Territory and Tasmania and those employing numerous New Apprentices at any one time were more likely to consider New Apprenticeships in the future.

Employer intentions to re-use the same NAC again are seemingly based on a combination of satisfaction with existing services and the degree of perceived (and actual) choice. Whereas nationally 3.1% of employers felt they had no choice but to use the same NAC again, in those regions where there was only one NAC provider the proportion of employers citing a lack of choice as their reason for using the same NAC again was considerably higher – 14.9% in Northern WA, 8.8% in the Northern Territory and 7.5% in Central and South Eastern WA.

Table 3: Future use of New Apprenticeships Centres

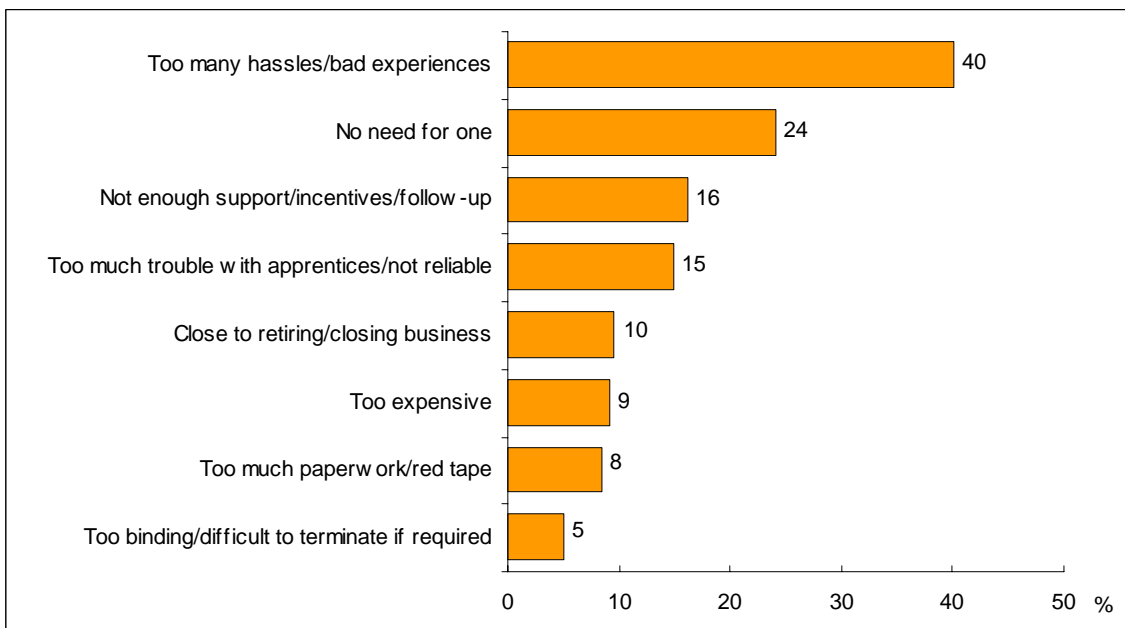
	Would consider New Apprenticeships in the future	Would use same NAC again
Total	93.1	92.7
Number of employees		
Less than 20	91.3	92.4
20 - 99	95.8	93.2
100 - 499	98.0	94.3
500 or more	96.3	91.3
State		
NSW	91.9	92.8
VIC	93.4	91.8
QLD	92.7	93.7
SA	94.2	93.2
WA	94.4	93.8
ACT	92.1	87.9
TAS	95.2	92.6
NT	97.5	98.7
Region		
Sydney	92.7	91.9
Riverina (NSW)	93.4	92.3
Hunter / North Coast	91.4	92.7
Illawarra / South East NSW	91.2	94.8
Western NSW	89.6	95.5
Melbourne	93.2	91.2
Geelong	94.1	89.8
Gippsland	91.9	91.6
Victorian Central Highlands	94.2	95.0
Brisbane	93.2	93.4
Central Queensland	93.7	92.5
Northern Queensland	92.1	95.7
South Queensland	90.7	93.9
Adelaide	95.0	92.4
SA Country	92.7	94.6
Perth	94.6	93.8
Central / South Eastern WA	93.8	98.7
Northern WA	92.4	88.1
Southern WA	94.3	92.5
ACT	92.1	88.0
Tasmania	95.2	92.5
Northern Territory	97.5	98.8
Approximate Number of New Apprentices Employed at any one time		
One/only ever had one	90.1	91.5
Two	94.2	93.8
Three	97.4	95.2
Four	93.3	93.7
Five	95.9	97.0
Six to ten	95.9	94.0
Eleven to twenty	97.8	92.7
More than twenty	97.0	90.5

Bases: *Would consider New Apprentices again*: Total Sample (n=5,687).

Would use same NAC again: Intending to use New apprentices again (n=5,411).

Figure 30 details the reason provided by employers for not using New Apprenticeships in the future. The most commonly cited reason was ‘too many hassles / bad experiences’ (40%).

Figure 30 : Reasons for not hiring a New Apprentice again



Base: Those who would not hire an apprentice again (n = 276).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Ninety seven percent of employers would recommend New Apprenticeships to another employer. Reasons for not recommending New Apprenticeships are shown in Figure 31.

Figure 31 : Reasons for not recommending New Apprenticeships



Base: Those who would not recommend New Apprenticeships (n = 182).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

4 Results for New Apprentices

4.1 Overall Satisfaction

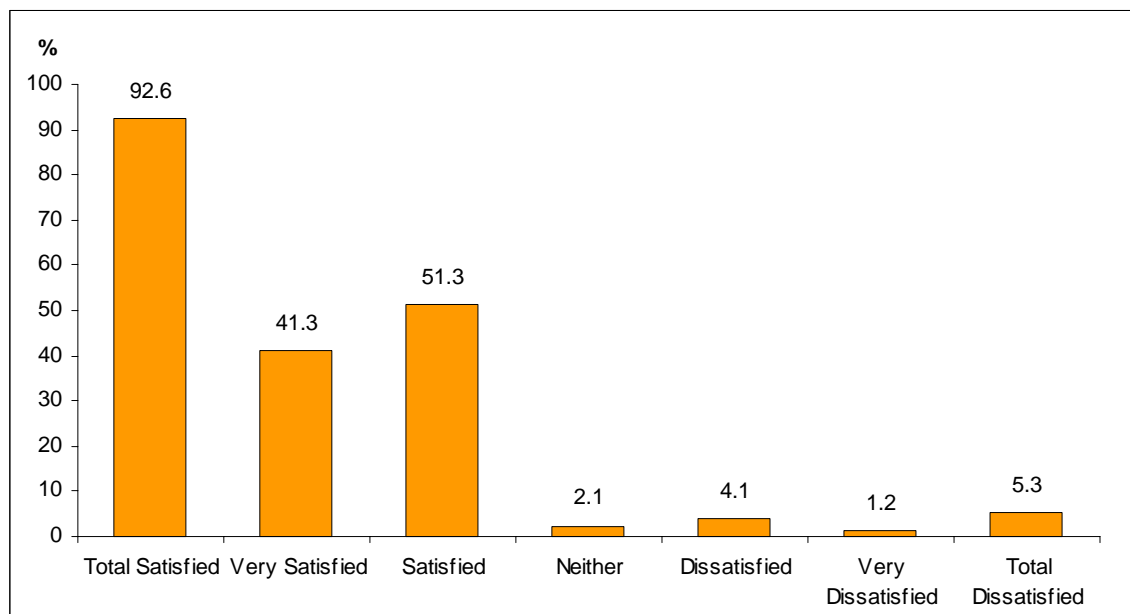
4.1.1 National Results

Figure 32 shows the national overall satisfaction results for New Apprentices. The overall satisfaction result of 92.6% is significantly above the KPI benchmark score of 80%.

The distribution of the overall satisfaction results shows that 41.3% of New Apprentices were 'very satisfied' with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre and a further 51.3% were satisfied.

Overall satisfaction levels were similar by age and sex. Apprentices were marginally more satisfied than trainees (94% compared to 92%) and, on-the-whole, satisfaction levels were slightly higher in the capital cities compared to regional areas.

Figure 32 : New Apprentices' Satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres – National Results

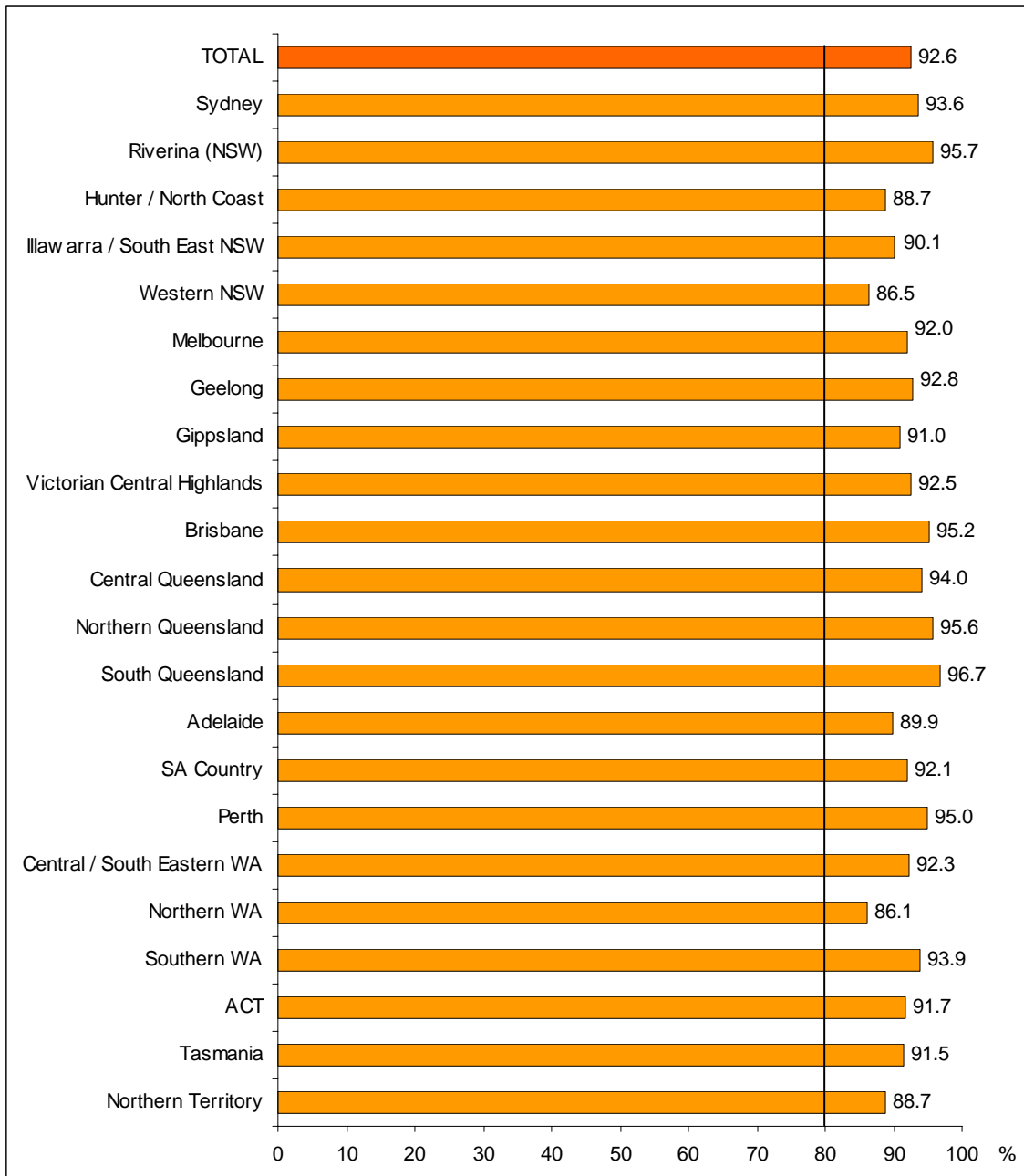


Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5677).

4.1.2 Regional Results

As illustrated in Figure 33, the KPI target score was exceeded within each designated New Apprenticeships region. The lowest regional result recorded was in Northern WA (as was the case for the employer survey) where overall satisfaction was 86%, still comfortably above the 80% target. All 72 individual contracts also comfortably surpassed the 80% KPI target score.

Figure 33 : New Apprentices' satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres – regional results



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5677).

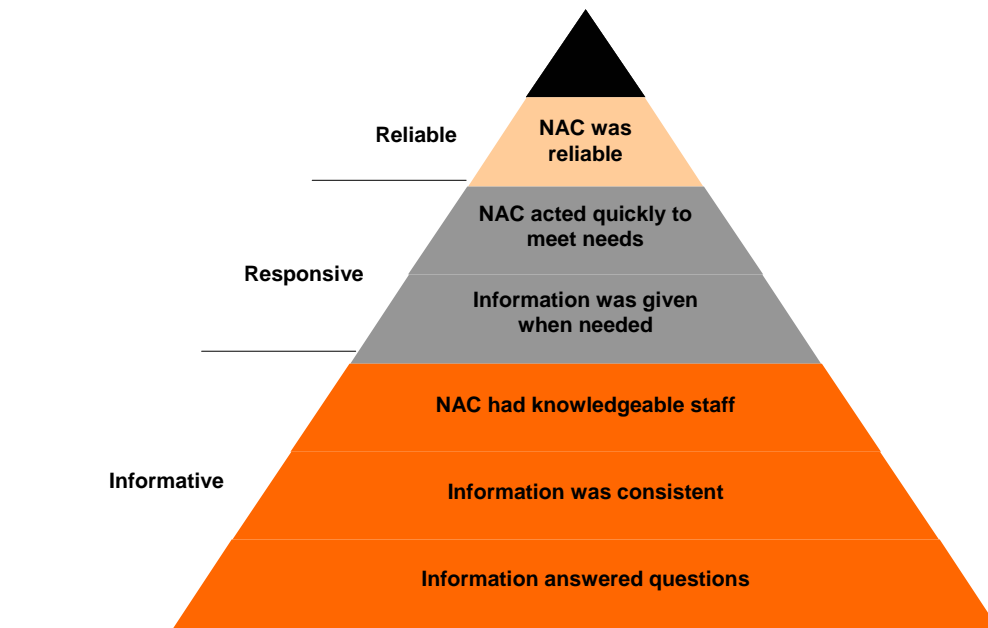
4.1.3 Main Drivers of New Apprentices Satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres

The analysis undertaken on the data from the New Apprentices Survey identified six customer service attributes that drive New Apprentices' overall satisfaction with the services provided by New Apprenticeships Centres (Figure 34).

Of these service attributes, the most important factor was having a NAC that was reliable, which was approximately a third more important as the next set of attributes relating to responsive service - 'NAC acted quickly to meet needs' and 'information was given when needed'. The final set of attributes driving overall satisfaction related to informative service – 'NAC had knowledgeable staff', 'information was consistent' and 'information answered questions'.

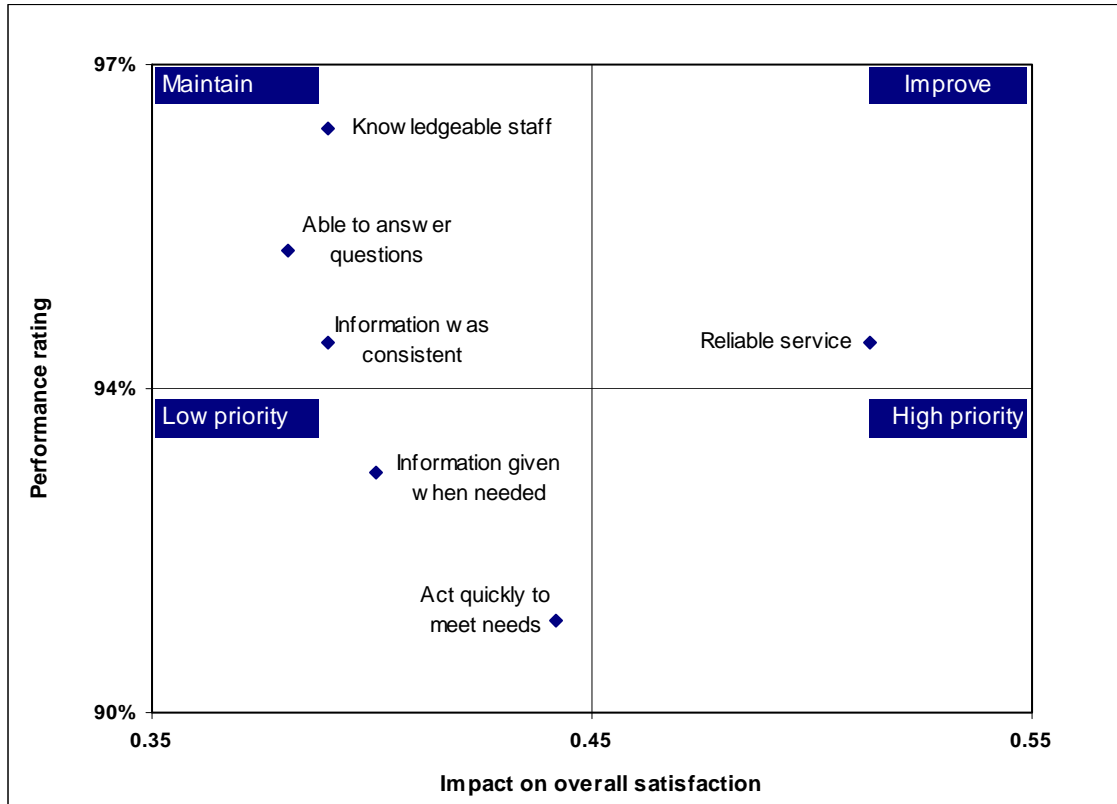
These attributes can be summarised into three dimensions creating a 'customer service model' for New Apprenticeships Centres with respect to New Apprentices. Effectively New Apprentices want a service relationship with their respective NACs that is reliable, responsive and informative.

Figure 34 : Main drivers of overall satisfaction for New Apprentices



The scatter diagram produced from the New Apprentices' survey data (Figure 35) shows that a focus on the continuing provision of 'reliable service' is what is needed for NACs to maintain or improve the favourable impressions held by New Apprentices.

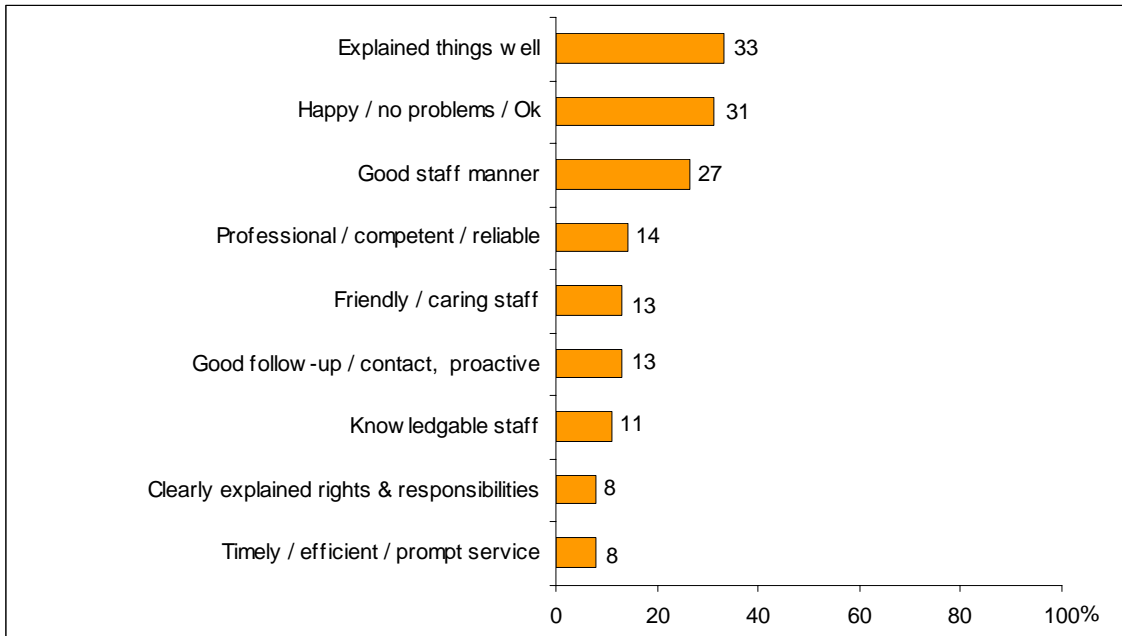
Figure 35 : Impact of service attributes on New Apprentices' overall satisfaction



4.1.4 Reasons for Satisfaction / Dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres

The main reasons given by New Apprentices for being satisfied with NAC services included having things well explained, an absence of problems and good staff manner. Proactive contact and follow up also figured prominently amongst the reasons for satisfaction.

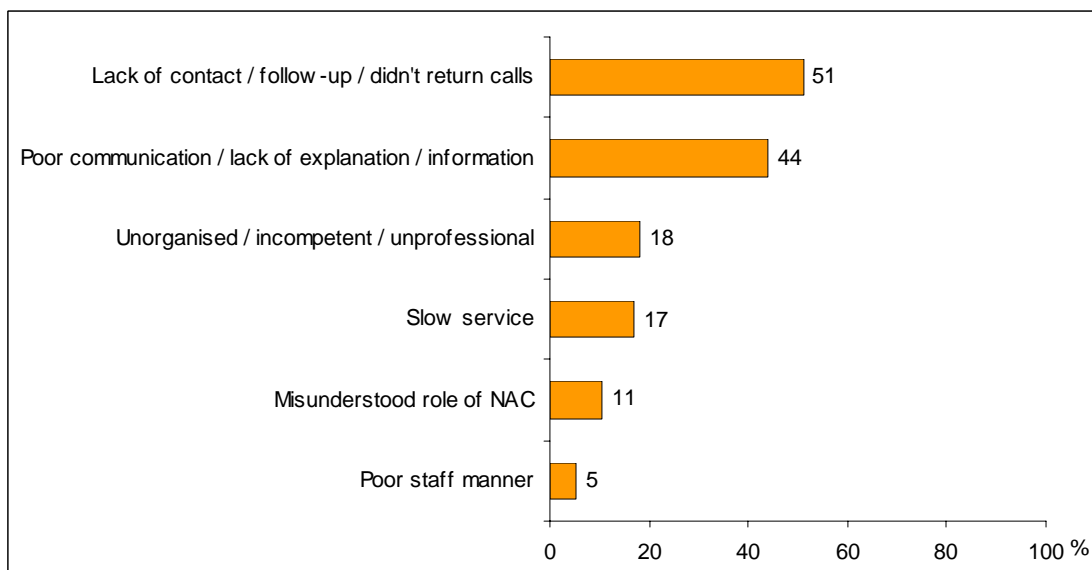
Figure 36 : Reasons given by New Apprentices for satisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres



Base: Total Satisfied (n=5214).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The most commonly reported reasons for dissatisfaction were lack of follow-up or contact and poor communication.

Figure 37 : Reasons given by New Apprentices for dissatisfaction with New Apprenticeships Centres



Base: Total Dissatisfied (n=342).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The reasons given by New Apprentices for being satisfied or dissatisfied with the services provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre are consistent with drivers of satisfaction, as identified in Section 4.1.3, and give New Apprenticeships Centres indicators of which areas of service delivery to New Apprentices need improvement.

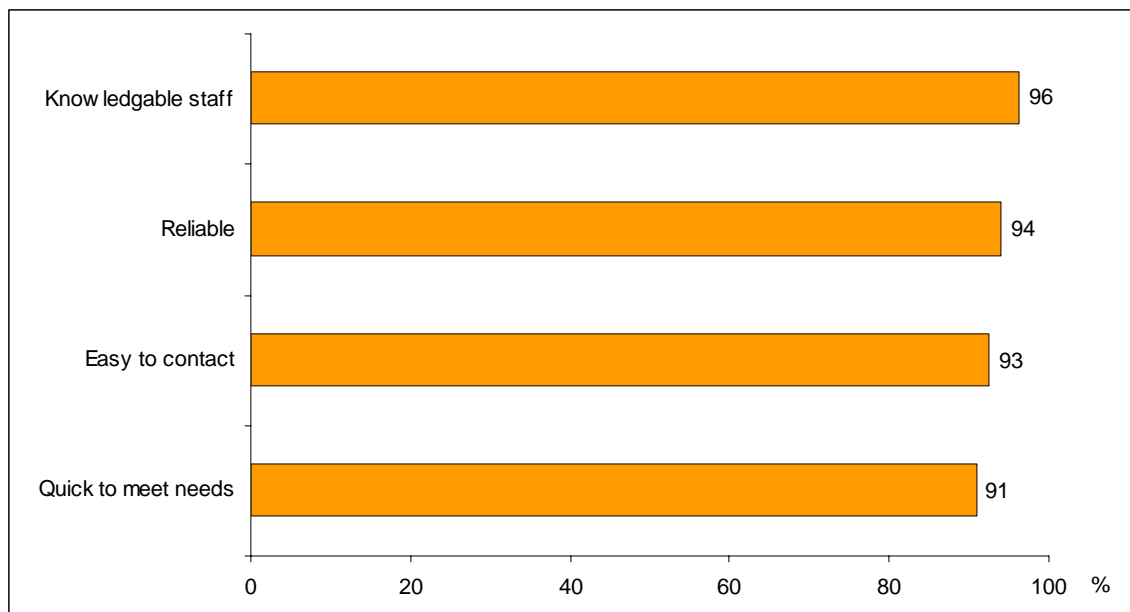
4.2 Selected Aspects of Customer Service

New Apprentices were asked to rate their New Apprenticeships Centre on a series of customer service aspects as shown in Figure 38. Favourable impressions of service topped 90% for each of the attributes measured ranging from 91% with respect to being 'quick to meet needs' to 96% with regard to having 'knowledgeable staff'.

It should be noted that compared with other aspects of customer service, there were slightly higher proportions of New Apprentices who felt unable to provide a response about the ease of contact (18%) and whether the New Apprenticeships Centre acted quickly to meet their needs (11%)⁴.

Younger New Apprentices (i.e. those aged 24 years or less) tended to be slightly more positive in terms of perceptions regarding ease of contact and staff knowledge. Apprentices were more likely than trainees to agree that the NAC was reliable and had knowledgeable staff. Generally speaking, approval ratings were slightly higher in the capital cities compared to the regional areas.

Figure 38 : Percentage agreement with selected statements about customer service



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

⁴ In keeping with the approach adopted throughout this report 'Don't Know / Can't Say' responses are generally excluded from the analysis.

4.3 Information Content and Delivery

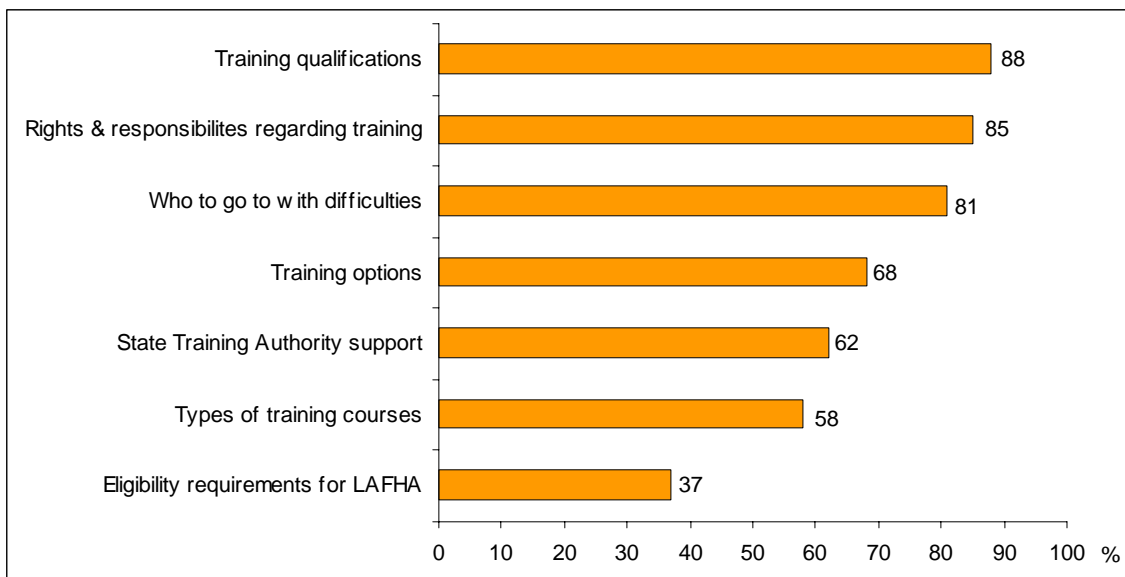
4.3.1 Information Content

A series of questions were asked of New Apprentices with a view to assessing whether or not New Apprenticeships Centres are providing them with comprehensive information and advice. The results from this line of questioning are provided in Figure 39.

While New Apprentices are being well informed by their NACs in terms of the ‘training qualifications’ they will attain, their ‘rights and responsibilities regarding training’ and the complaints handling procedures (i.e. ‘who to go to with difficulties’) they are seemingly less well informed regarding their training options, the types of training courses available to them and their eligibility for the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) (although only relevant to a small percentage of New Apprentices).

New Apprentices in Queensland were significantly more likely than those in other states to recall receiving information from their NAC about the role of the State Training Authority and the types of training courses that might be available to them.

Figure 39 : Percentage recall of specific information or advice being provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

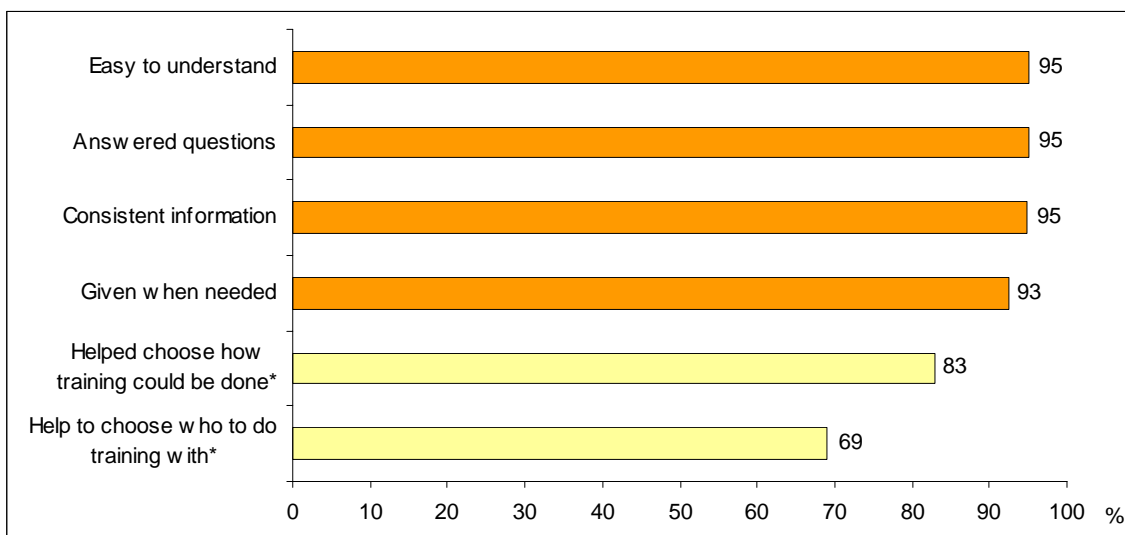
4.3.2 Information Quality

All the various aspects of information quality such as timeliness, relevance, consistency and ease of comprehension were rated very highly by New Apprentices (93% or above) (Figure 40).

New Apprentices in the Northern Territory were asked additional questions about how helpful the NAC was in providing information about who to do their training with and how to choose a training provider. Compared to the national averages for the other aspects of information delivery, apprentices in the Northern Territory were less likely to be happy with these aspects of the information they were provided with by their NAC.

Ninety five percent of New Apprentices were satisfied with the information or advice provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre (see Figure 41).

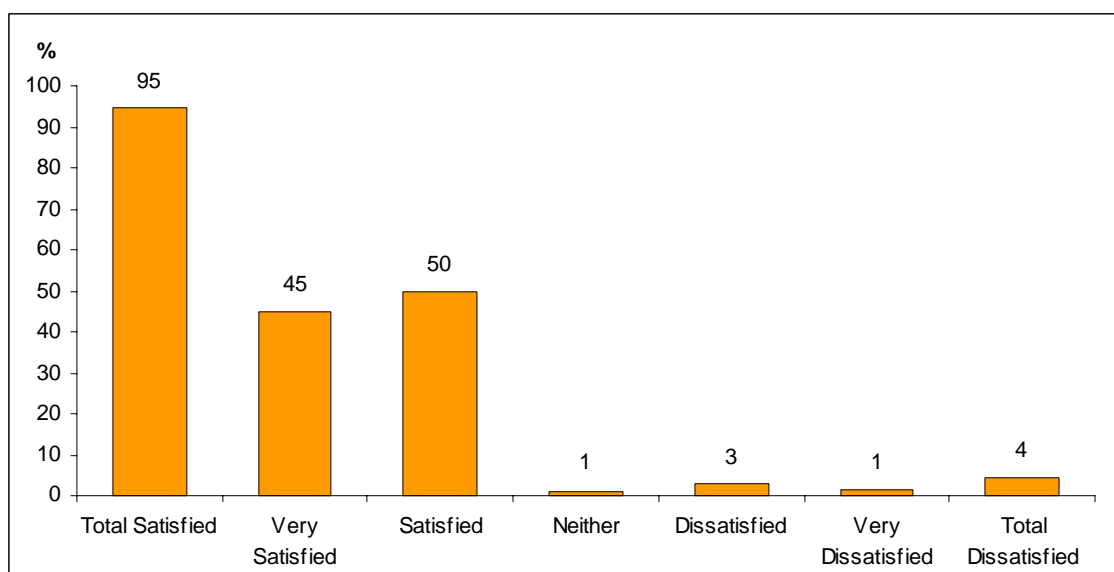
Figure 40 : Percentage of New Apprentices with positive perceptions regarding aspects of information quality



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't know / Can't Say* responses).

* Northern Territory residents only (n = 80).

Figure 41 : Percentage of New Apprentices satisfied with the information or advice provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n=5,709).

4.4 Follow up Contact and Complaints Handling

4.4.1 Follow up Contact

Excluding contact relating to the Living Away From Home Allowance (see Section 4.5), 14% of New Apprentices had contacted their New Apprenticeships Centre in the six months prior to the survey. The proportion is slightly higher amongst apprentices (compared with trainees), under 25 year olds and females. The reasons given by New Apprentices for contacting their NAC are various (see Figure 42) and include problems with form completion, training related issues, wages queries, problems with employers and problems with training providers.

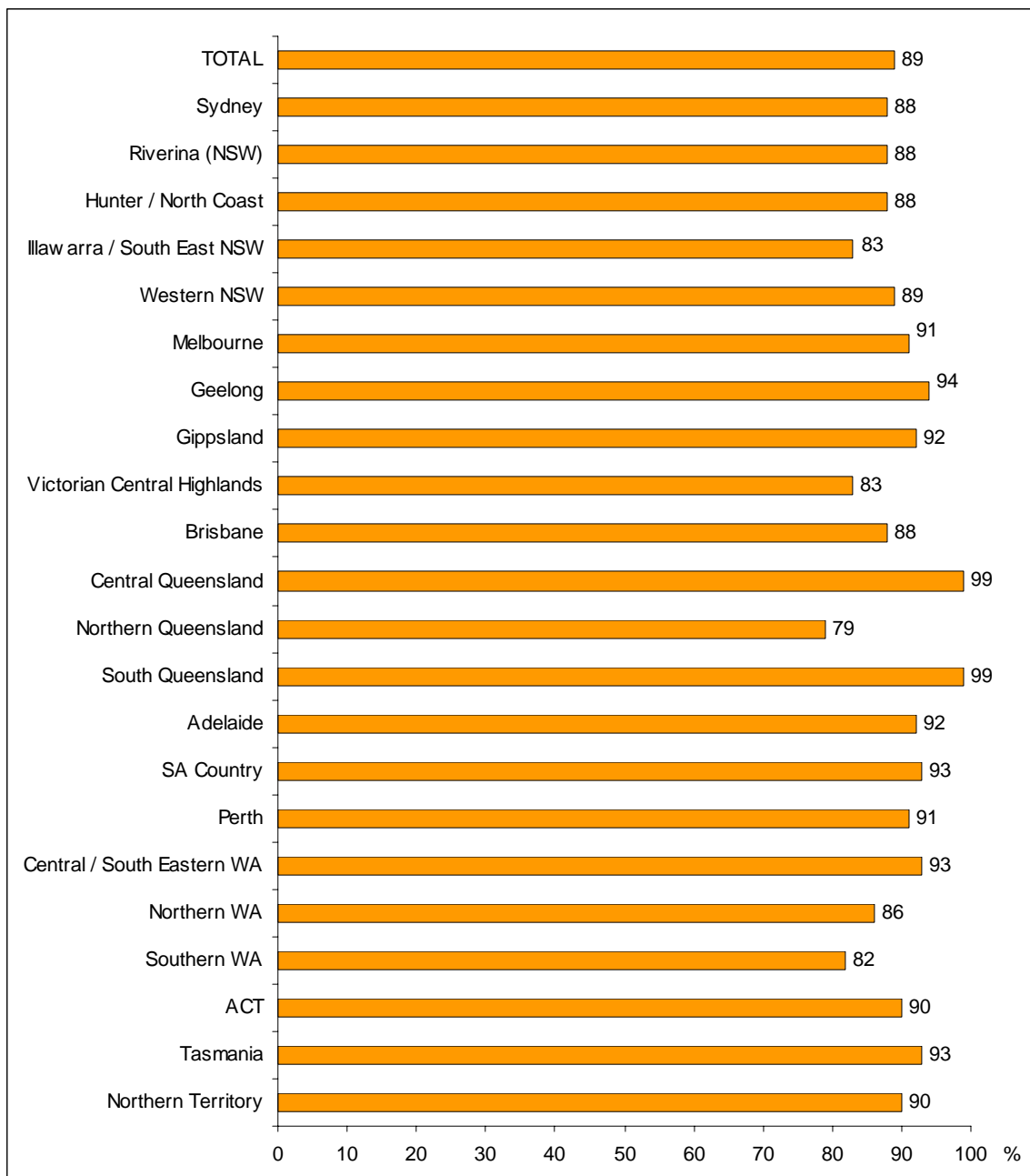
Figure 42 : Reasons for contact with New Apprenticeships Centre



Base: Apprentices who have contacted NAC for reason other than LAFHA (excludes *Don't Know* responses) (n=940).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

The proportion of New Apprentices satisfied with the service provided by their New Apprenticeships Centre when contacted was 89% (Figure 43). There is a considerable degree of regional variation in this finding ranging from 79% in Northern Queensland to 99% in both Central Queensland and South Queensland.

Figure 43 : Percent satisfied with New Apprenticeships Centre service in response to New Apprentice initiated contact by region

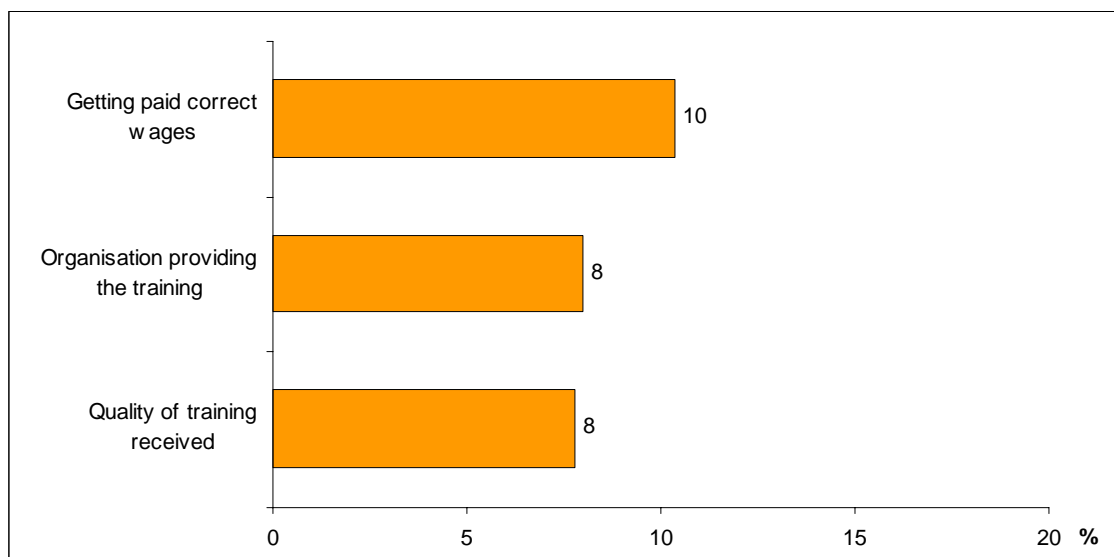


Base: Apprentices who have contacted NAC for reason other than LAFHA (excludes *Don't Know* responses) (n=934).

4.4.2 Problems Encountered and Complaints Handling

In order to identify what problems, if any, are experienced by New Apprentices in respect to specific aspects of their New Apprenticeship, respondents were read a list of potential problems and asked whether or not they had experienced them. Those problem areas identified by at least 5% of New Apprentices are shown in Figure 44. As a relatively high proportion (one in ten) indicated either a problem with or the need to check whether or not they were receiving the correct wage this would seem to be an area where further explanation may be required.

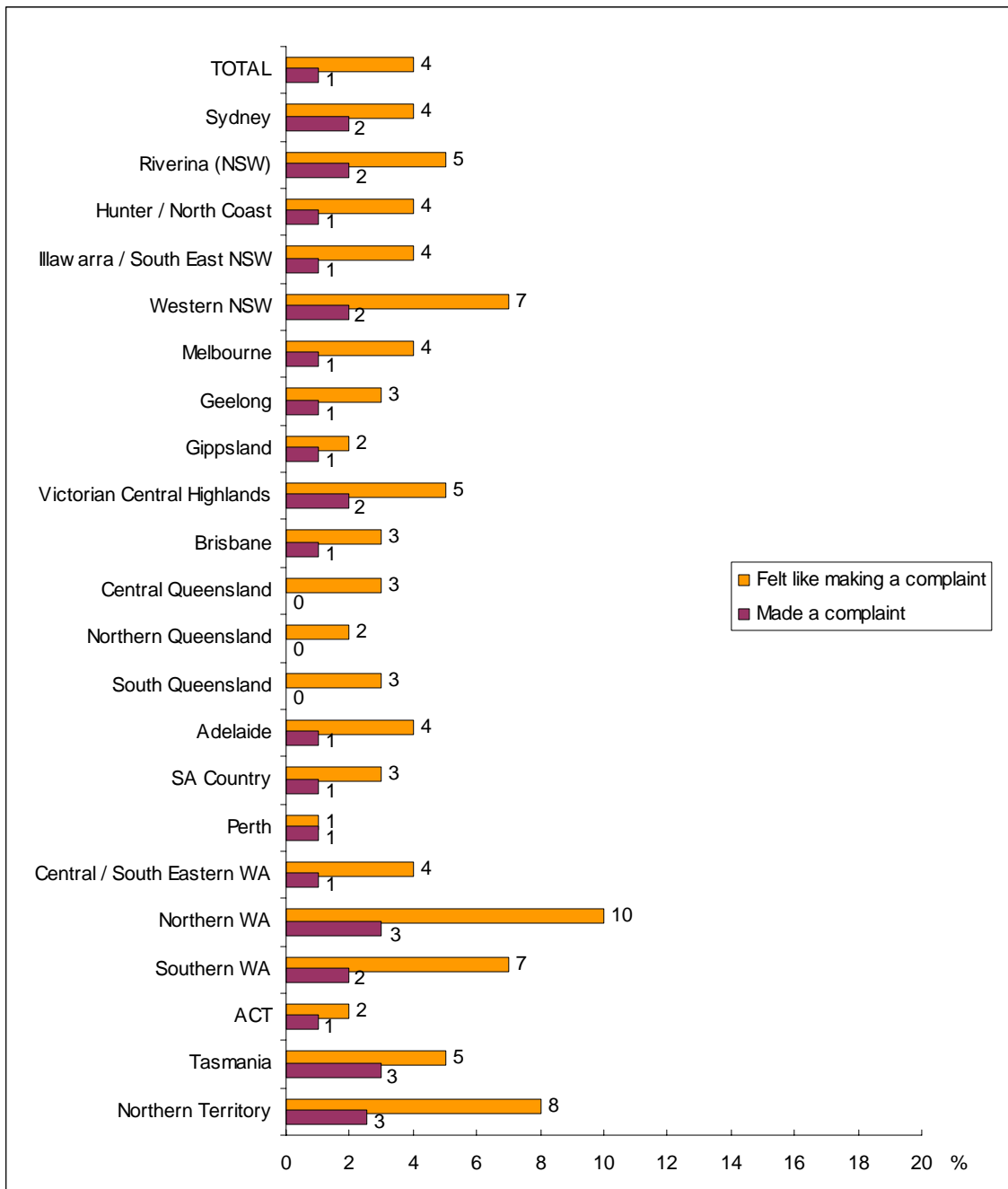
Figure 44 : Percent of New Apprentices with a particular problem with their New Apprenticeship



Base: Total Sample (size varies by statement due to exclusion of *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses).
Note: Prompted recall question.

With respect to complaints, 4% of New Apprentices felt like making a complaint and 1% actually went on to make a complaint (or had someone complain on their behalf). New Apprentices in the capital cities were more likely to make a complaint than New Apprentices in regional areas. Likewise, trainees were more likely to make a complaint than apprentices. The regional results are provided in Figure 45 and show Northern WA, the Northern Territory, Southern WA and Western NSW as the regions where the highest proportion of New Apprentices felt like making a complaint about the services they received from their NAC.

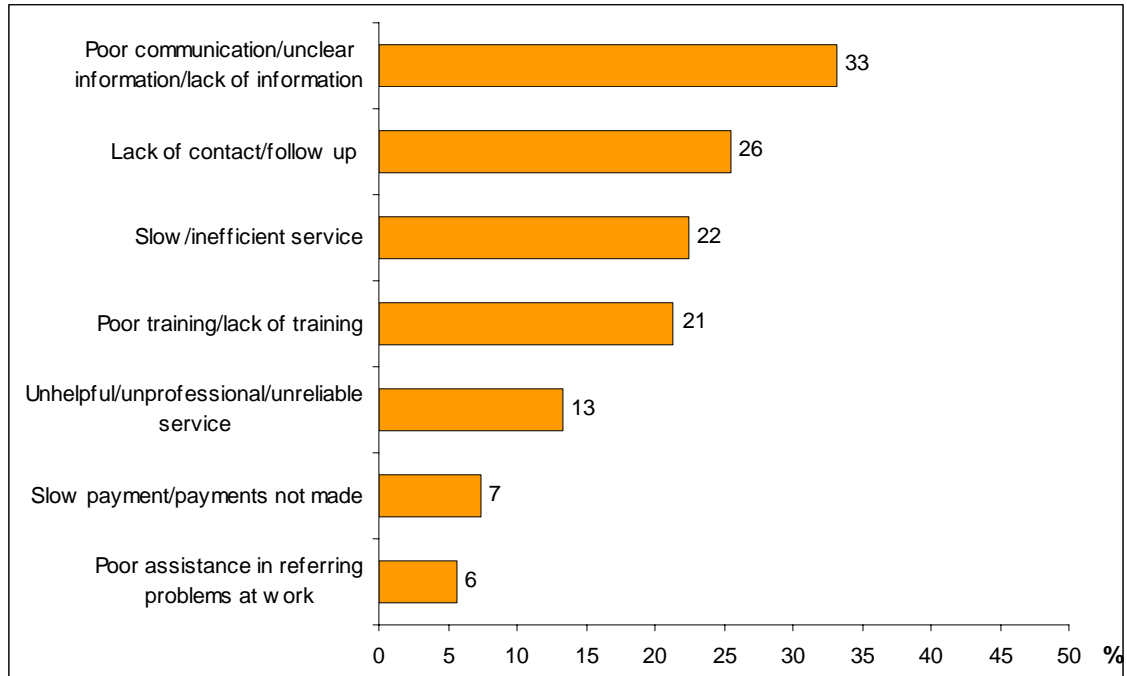
Figure 45 : Percentage of New Apprentices that felt like making a complaint and did make a complaint by region



Base: Total Sample (n=5670).

Poor communication / lack of communication / unclear information was the reason given most often for wanting to complain. Male New Apprentices reported wanting to complain about slow and inefficient service more than female New Apprentices.

Figure 46 : Reason for wanting to complain

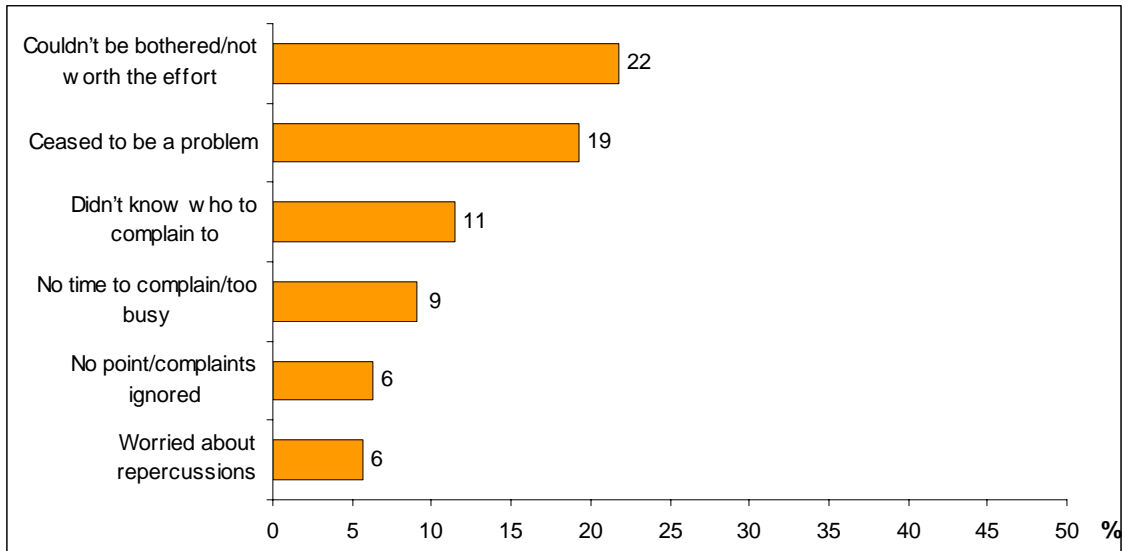


Base: Apprentices wanting to make a complaint (n = 230).

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Just over one in five New Apprentices reported not making a complaint because they couldn't be bothered or felt it was not worth the effort. One in ten New Apprentices stated that they did not know to whom they should make the complaint. These figures perhaps suggested that more can be done to improve communications to New Apprentices in respect of the complaints handling processes and procedures.

Figure 47 : Percentage citing specific reasons for not following through with a potential complaint

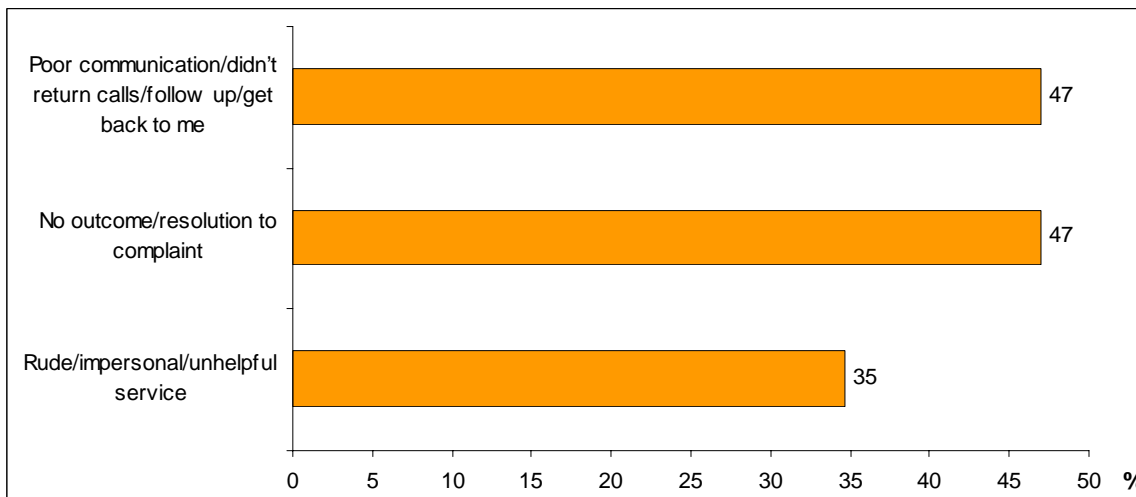


Base: Apprentices who wanted to make a complaint but did not. (n = 146).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Only 45% of New Apprentices reported being satisfied with the way their complaint was handled.

Of those New Apprentices that were dissatisfied with the way their complaint was handled (n=36), nearly half cited poor communication as the reason for their further dissatisfaction. The same proportion also cited the lack of resolution of their issues as a reason for continuing dissatisfaction and about one in three commented on rude, impersonal or unhelpful service.

Figure 48 : Reasons for dissatisfaction with complaint handling

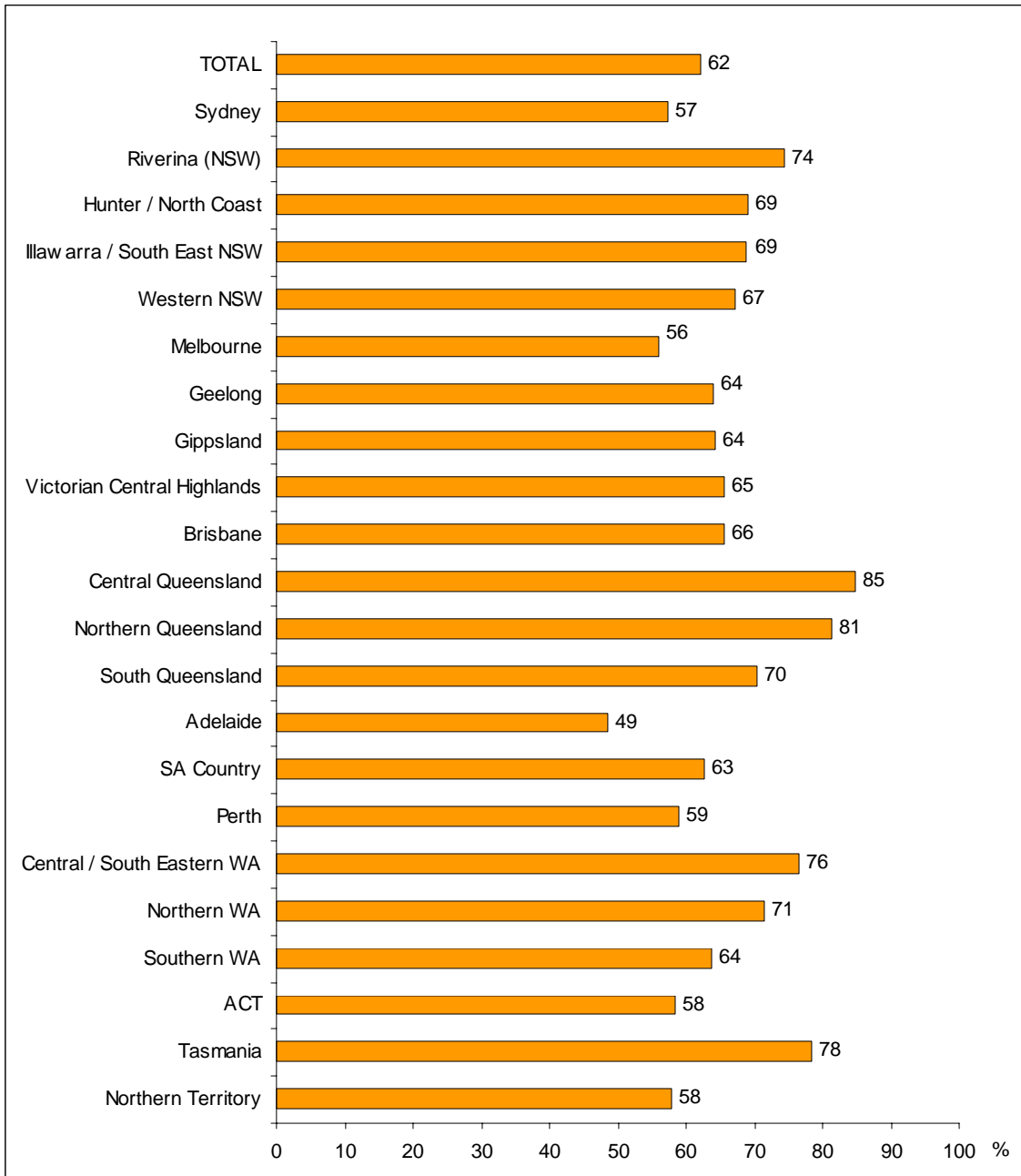


Base: Apprentices who made a complaint and were dissatisfied with complaint handling (n = 36).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

4.5 Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)

Sixty two percent of New Apprentices were aware of the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA). Figure 49 shows considerable regional variation with awareness greater outside the capital cities.

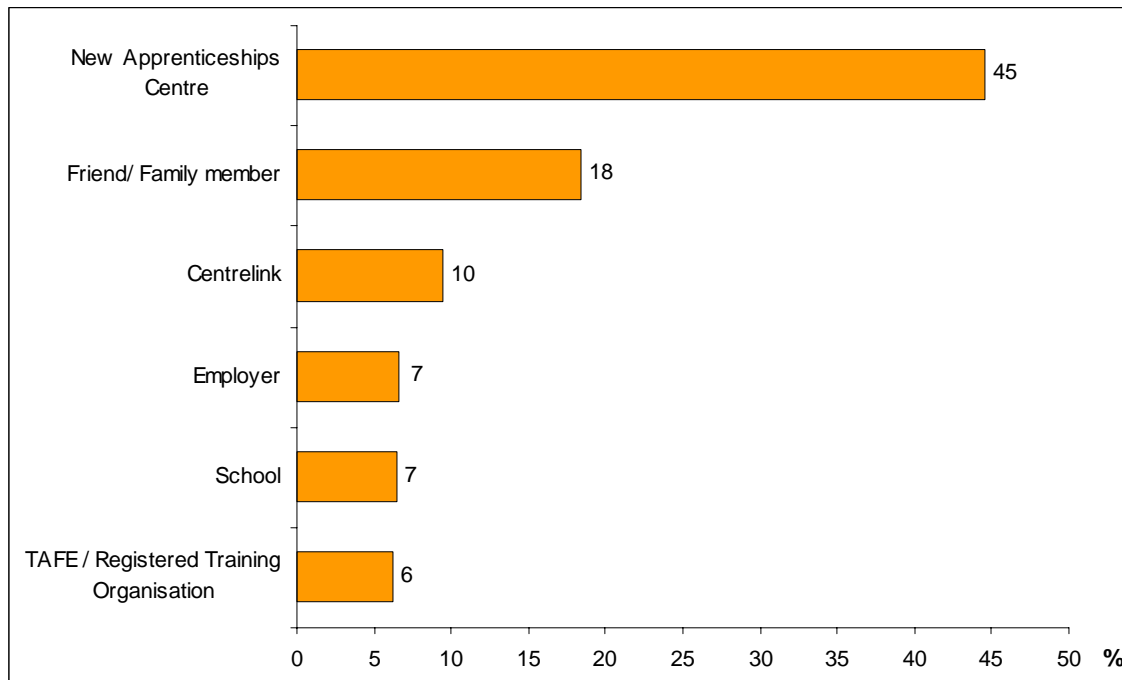
Figure 49 : Percentage awareness of Living Away From Home Allowance by region



Base: Total Sample (n = 5760).

In terms of how New Apprentices became aware of LAFHA (Figure 50), 45% found out about LAFHA via their NAC with family and friends being the next most important source (18%).

Figure 50 : Information sources for the Living Away From Home Allowance

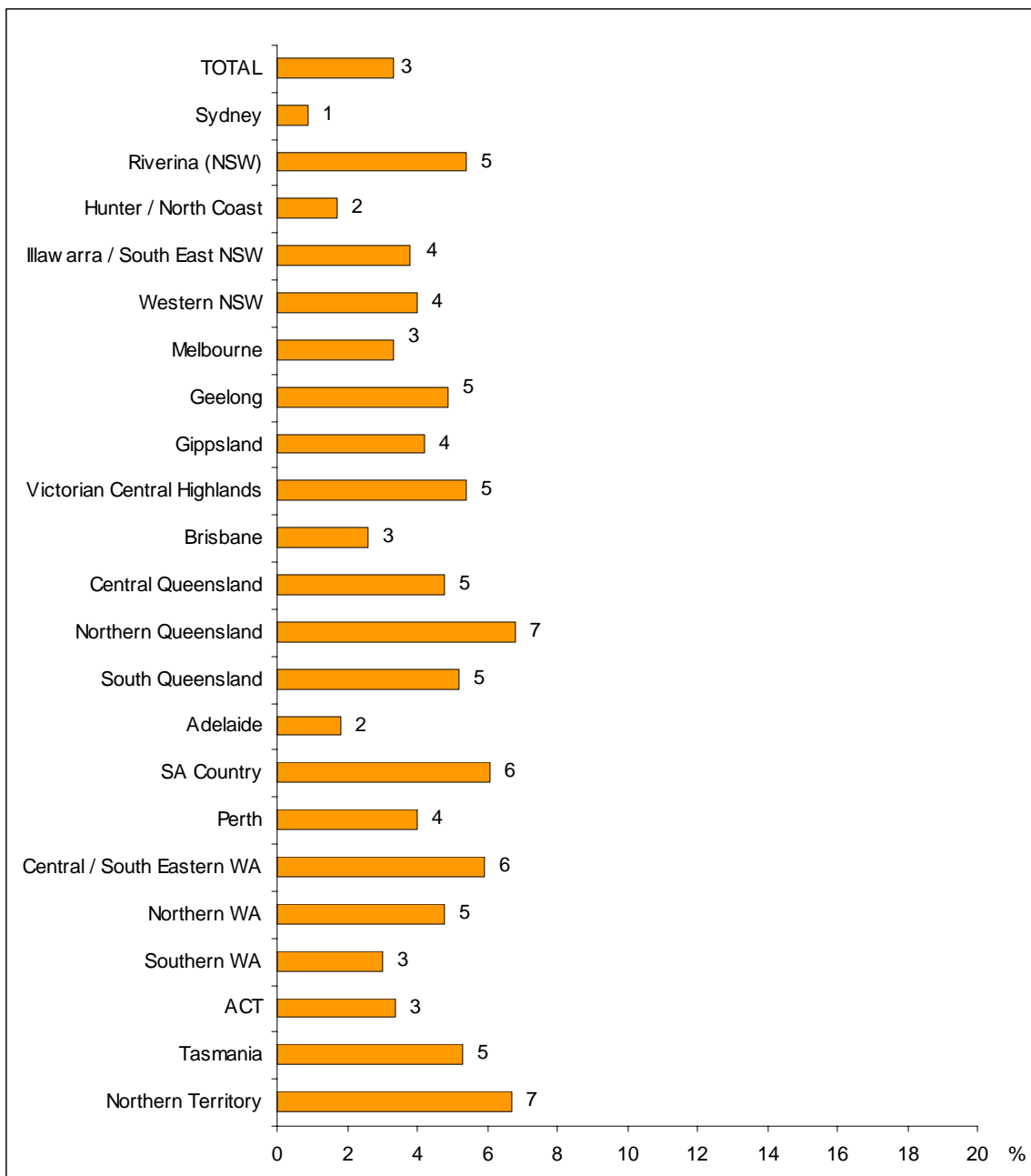


Base: Apprentices aware of LAFHA (n = 3941).

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

A total of 3% of New Apprentices applied for LAFHA and 2% reported receiving it. The regional comparison for applications is shown in Figure 51. Males were more than twice as likely as females to have applied for LAFHA and, as would be expected, most of the New Apprentices who reported having applied for LAFHA were under 25 years of age. The regions with the highest rates of LAFHA applications were Northern Queensland and the Northern Territory.

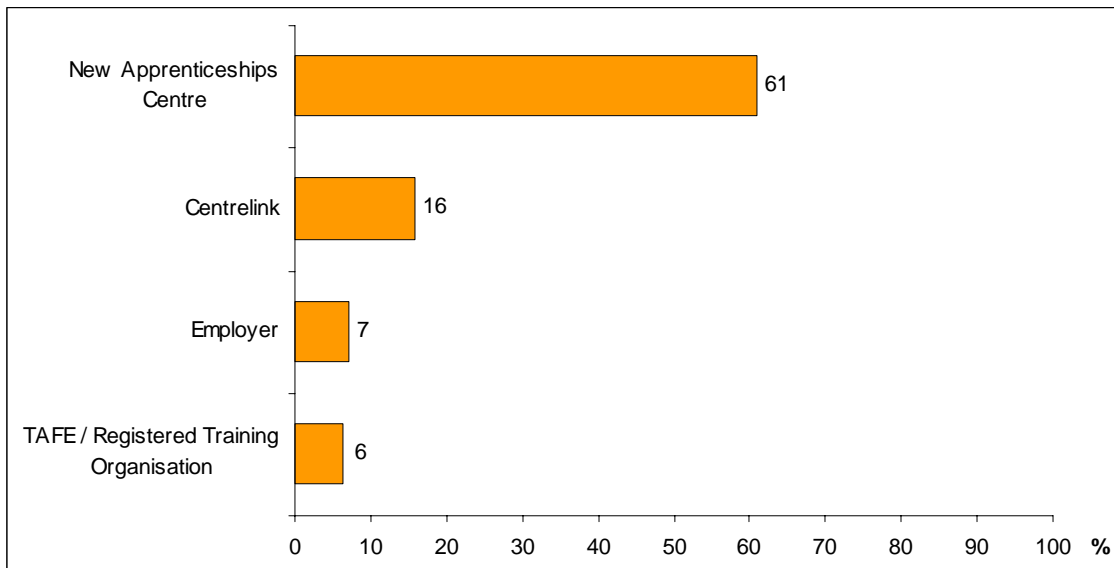
Figure 51 : Percentage of New Apprentices who applied for the Living Away From Home Allowance by region



Base: Total Sample (excluding *Don't Know / Can't Say* responses) (n = 5901).

The majority of New Apprentices who applied for LAFHA received the form from their NAC with about one in six receiving it from Centrelink.

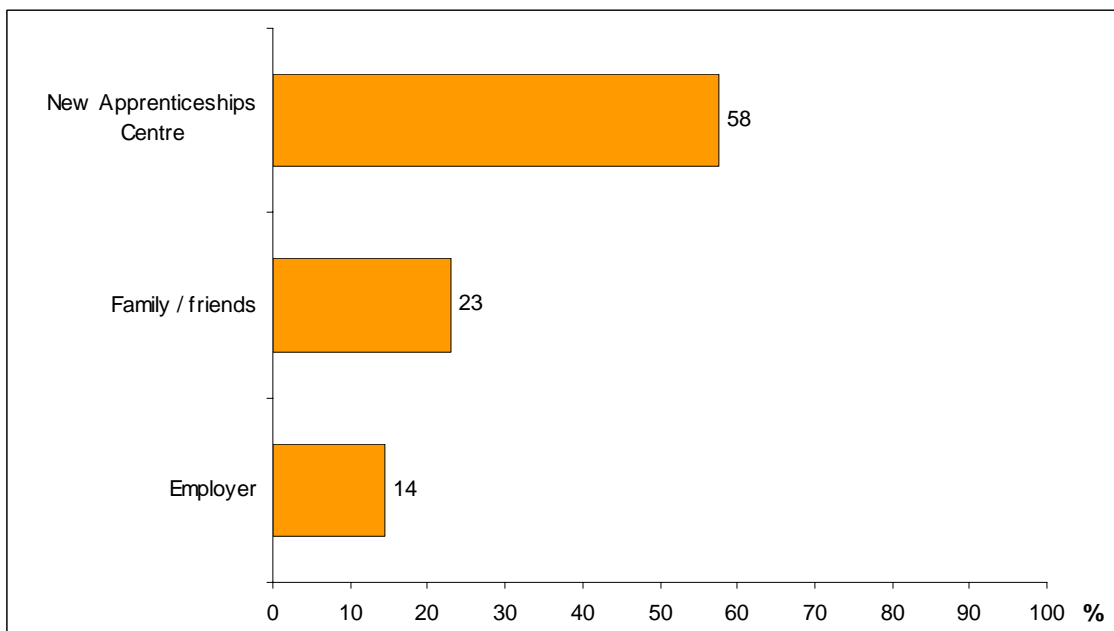
Figure 52 : Source of the Living Away From Home Allowance application form



Base: Apprentices who applied for LAFHA (n = 408).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Just over one in five LAFHA applicants (22%) needed help in filling in the LAFHA Application form. The NAC was again the most used resource in this regard, with half of the New Apprentices that needed help in completing their LAFHA form getting this help from their NAC. Only a very small number of New Apprentices reported getting help from any other place other than those shown in Figure 53.

Figure 53 : Source of help for completing the Living Away From Home Allowance application form

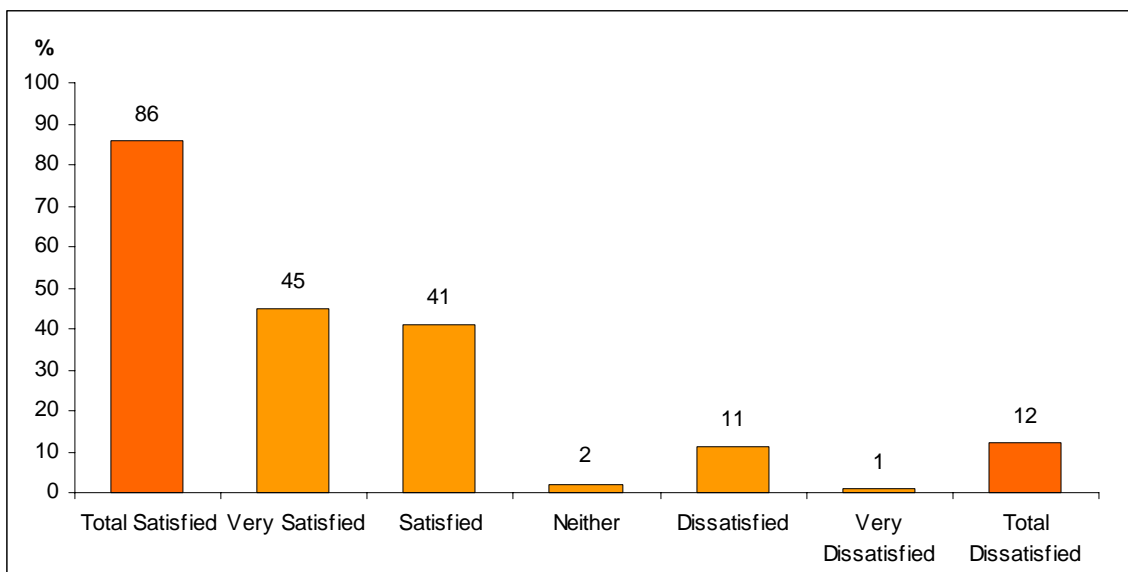


Base: Apprentices who sought help to fill out the LAFHA application (n = 104).
 Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Nineteen percent of New Apprentices who applied for LAFHA reported having problems other than those related to filling out the form. This proportion was much higher for New Apprentices who did not actually go on to receive LAFHA. Amongst those who did receive LAFHA, about one in six reported still having problems. The majority of the problems related to delays in getting the payment or to the claim form or other paperwork. New Apprentices were least likely to say that the NAC could help with problems relating to the claim form and other paperwork and most likely to say it could help with getting the required documentation.

Overall, 86% of New Apprentices were satisfied with the assistance they received when applying for LAFHA, as shown below.

Figure 54 : Overall satisfaction with assistance provided by New Apprenticeships Centre in applying for LAFHA



Base: Apprentices helped by NAC to complete form or fix problem (excluding *Don't Know* responses) (n = 85).

Appendix 1: Technical Notes

The Employer Survey

Sample Overview

DEST's Training and Youth Information Management System (TYIMS), which is the database used by New Apprenticeships Centres to record all required information from New Apprentices and their employers, was used as the sampling frame for the survey.

The sample of employers was randomly selected by DEST, stratified by New Apprenticeships Centre and included on the basis of having received services from a New Apprenticeships Centre in the last 6 months and having complete telephone contact details and a mailing address.

Table A1 (next page) shows the number of selections per strata. As can be seen, three times the target number of interviews was selected per New Apprenticeships Centre, with the exception of Contract Ids 304, 305, 312, 313, 314, 315, 327, 328, and 348, where the total population of employers was provided. For these contracts, the target was to maximise the yield from the available sample. Two providers (Contract Ids 336 and 354) were excluded due to a lack of sample.

It was necessary to initiate calls to an average of 1.9 selections to achieve each interview. The number of selections initiated can be used to guide the minimum number of initial selections for the 2005 survey.

Primary Approach Letter

An approach letter was mailed to each sample member approximately one week before the commencement of interviewing. DEST provided an electronic letterhead and signature block to facilitate mail merging, as well as Department window-faced envelopes.

The telephone number at which contact would be attempted was included in the personalised letter, encouraging sample members to call the Social Research Centre 1800 number to provide updated details as necessary.

Return to sender mail received by DEST was forwarded to the Social Research Centre for reconciliation with the original sample. In accordance with standard procedures, employers with a returned approach letter were not removed from the sample, but were treated in the same way as other employer sample records that were randomly served for call initiation by the sample management system. The rationale for continuing to place a call to return to sender employers is that, in some cases, the telephone number remains correct (even though the address may have changed) or a forwarding number for the employer can be obtained from the current occupant.

Table A1: Employer Survey - Sample provided at the regional contract level

Tender region	Contract ID	Target interviews	Total sample provided	Total sample initiated	Interviews achieved	Ratio - sample initiated to interviews completed
Project total		5685	16224	10724	5687	1.9
Hunter and N Coast	300	80	240	148	80	1.9
Sydney	301	80	240	166	81	2.0
Western NSW	302	80	240	139	83	1.7
Illawarra & SE NSW	303	80	240	161	80	2.0
Riverina	304	80	181	141	80	1.8
ACT	305	64*	100	86	63	1.4
Perth	306	80	240	159	81	2.0
Adelaide	307	80	240	164	84	2.0
Brisbane	308	80	240	138	80	1.7
Adelaide	309	80	240	159	80	2.0
SA Country	310	80	240	140	82	1.7
Brisbane	311	80	240	134	81	1.7
Central Qld	312	45*	62	57	45	1.3
Northern Qld	313	74*	116	105	74	1.4
South Qld	314	64*	111	101	64	1.6
Adelaide	315	80	133	127	78	1.6
Sydney	316	80	240	174	80	2.2
ACT	317	80	240	151	80	1.9
Melbourne	318	80	240	164	80	2.1
Illawarra & SE NSW	319	80	240	142	80	1.8
Perth	320	80	240	160	81	2.0
Central & SE WA	321	80	240	157	80	2.0
Southern WA	322	80	240	155	81	1.9
Northern WA	323	80	240	182	80	2.3
SA Country	324	80	240	147	79	1.9
Perth	325	80	240	160	80	2.0
Tasmania	326	80	240	147	81	1.8
Hunter and N Coast	327	80	211	159	80	2.0
Western NSW	328	80	169	150	79	1.9
Sydney	329	80	240	163	80	2.0
Hunter and N Coast	330	80	240	161	80	2.0
Western NSW	331	80	240	141	79	1.8
Riverina	332	80	240	141	80	1.8
Illawarra & SE NSW	333	80	240	145	80	1.8
ACT	334	80	240	139	80	1.7
Northern Qld	335	80	240	134	80	1.7
Geelong	337	80	240	167	81	2.1
Melbourne	338	80	240	220	78	2.8
Gippsland	339	80	240	141	81	1.7
Southern WA	340	80	240	153	79	1.9
Tasmania	341	80	240	159	80	2.0
Melbourne	342	80	240	169	80	2.1
Perth	343	80	240	157	78	2.0
Melbourne	344	80	240	169	80	2.1
Vic Ctrl Highlands	345	80	240	149	81	1.8
Geelong	346	80	240	157	81	1.9
Gippsland	347	80	200	144	79	1.8
Central Qld	348	78*	101	99	78	1.3
Tasmania	349	80	240	151	79	1.9
Brisbane	350	80	240	155	81	1.9
Northern Qld	351	80	240	140	81	1.7
South Qld	352	80	240	118	81	1.5
Central Qld	353	80	240	106	79	1.3

Table A1 (cont): Employer Survey - Sample provided at the regional contract level

	Contract ID	Target interviews	Total sample provided	Total sample initiated	Interviews achieved	Ratio - sample initiated to interviews completed
Tender region						
Sydney	355	80	240	161	80	2.0
Riverina	356	80	240	142	80	1.8
Vic Ctrl Highlands	357	80	240	154	79	1.9
Brisbane	358	80	240	159	80	2.0
South Qld	359	80	240	152	78	1.9
Tasmania	360	80	240	146	80	1.8
Melbourne	361	80	240	166	80	2.1
Vic Ctrl Highlands	362	80	240	157	81	1.9
Geelong	363	80	240	164	81	2.0
Gippsland	364	80	240	158	80	2.0
Adelaide	365	80	240	160	80	2.0
Melbourne	366	80	240	179	81	2.2
Sydney	367	80	240	183	80	2.3
Adelaide	368	80	240	160	79	2.0
Vic Ctrl Highlands	369	80	240	160	82	2.0
Geelong	370	80	240	156	78	2.0
SA Country	371	80	240	140	78	1.8
Gippsland	372	80	200	142	78	1.8
Northern Territory	373	80	240	134	79	1.7

Fieldwork Statistics

A total of 46,393 call attempts were made in the course of completing the Employer Survey. The most frequent call outcome was appointments (34.8%), followed by no answer (19.4%), answering machines (13.3%), and interviews (12.3%). On average an interview was achieved every 8.2 calls, and the average number of calls for each number initiated was 4.3.

Table A2: Employer Survey - Analysis of all call attempts

Total numbers initiated	10724	
Completed interviews	5687	12.3%
Appointment made	16144	34.8%
No answer	9022	19.4%
Answering machine / voicemail	6169	13.3%
Respondent temporarily unable to continue	3595	7.7%
Engaged	1904	4.1%
Claim not to have had contact with NAC	1739	3.7%
Outright refusal (at introduction)	586	1.3%
Number disconnected / not a business number	378	0.8%
Soft refusal	367	0.8%
Wrong number / person or business not known	329	0.7%
Respondent away for duration of survey	187	0.4%
Fax/modem	172	0.4%
Duplicate number (claims to have done survey)	92	0.2%
Language difficulty	22	0.0%
Total attempts	46393	100.0%
Average calls per interview	8.2	
Ratio of numbers initiated to interviews achieved	1.9	
Average calls per number initiated	4.3	

Table A3 shows the final call result for all numbers initiated. An interview was achieved at 53.3% of numbers for which calls were initiated. This is referred to as the "interview rate".

To determine the response rate for the Employer Survey, it is necessary to exclude unusable numbers (2.9% of all numbers initiated), out of scope (18.8%) and those where no contact could be established within the call cycle (8.3%). On this basis, the final overall response rate, defined as completed interviews (5715, including pilot test interviews) as a proportion of sample members who could be contacted and were not identified as out of scope (7507), was 76.1%. This compares favourably with similar surveys conducted by the Social Research Centre.

Table A3: Employer Survey - Analysis of final call outcomes

Total sample provided	16224		
Numbers initiated as % sample provided	66.1%		
Total numbers initiated	10727		
		As % of numbers initiated	As % of in scope contacts
Unusable numbers			
Number disconnected / unable to track	2.9%		
<i>A: Sub total unusable numbers</i>	2.9%		
Contacts - out of scope			
Claim not to have had contact with NAC	15.4%		
Person not known at number provided	2.5%		
Duplicate number (claims to have done survey)	0.9%		
<i>B: Subtotal contacts - out of scope</i>	18.8%		
Subtotal unusable numbers (A+B)	21.7%		
No contact (unresolved)			
Engaged	0.4%		
Answering machine	2.2%		
No answer	4.2%		
Fax/Modem	1.6%		
<i>C: Sub total no contact</i>	8.3%		
Contacts - in scope			
Completed interviews	53.3%	76.1%	
Stopped interview	0.9%	1.3%	
Outright refusal (at introduction)	3.4%	4.8%	
Soft refusal / temporarily unable to complete	6.2%	8.9%	
Away duration	1.7%	2.4%	
Language difficulty	0.1%	0.2%	
Appointment made	4.4%	6.2%	
<i>D: Subtotal Contacts - in scope</i>	70.0%	100.0%	

Table A4 shows that the interview rate for some tender regions was well in excess of the average (53%), for example, 77% in Central Queensland and over 60% in NT, Northern Queensland and South Queensland.

Table A4: Employer Survey - Call outcomes by state and tender region

	Ratio - sample initiated to interviews completed	Interviews as % sample initiated	Refusals as % sample initiated	Non contacts as % sample initiated	Unusable numbers as % sample initiated
Total (all tender regions)	1.9	53%	10%	7%	22%
ACT	1.7	58%	12%	7%	15%
Sydney	2.0	49%	10%	4%	30%
Hunter and N Coast	1.9	52%	9%	12%	21%
Illawarra & SE NSW	1.9	54%	6%	17%	18%
Riverina	1.7	57%	9%	4%	24%
Western NSW	1.8	56%	8%	8%	17%
Total NSW	1.9	52%	9%	8%	22%
Northern Territory	1.6	63%	10%	8%	8%
Brisbane	1.8	55%	11%	3%	23%
Central Qld	1.3	77%	8%	0%	10%
Northern Qld	1.6	62%	10%	7%	17%
South Qld	1.7	60%	11%	4%	18%
Total QLD	1.6	61%	10%	4%	18%
Adelaide	1.9	52%	8%	3%	26%
SA Country	1.8	56%	6%	7%	22%
Total SA	1.9	53%	7%	4%	24%
Tasmania	1.9	53%	7%	6%	25%
Melbourne	2.2	45%	17%	7%	23%
Geelong	2.0	50%	8%	10%	24%
Gippsland	1.8	55%	8%	6%	23%
Vic Ctrl Highlands	1.9	53%	8%	11%	20%
Total VIC	2.0	50%	11%	8%	23%
Perth	2.0	51%	10%	3%	25%
Central & SE WA	2.0	51%	11%	1%	22%
Northern WA	2.0	51%	8%	6%	21%
Southern WA	1.9	52%	5%	17%	16%
Total WA	2.0	50%	10%	6%	22%

The New Apprentice Survey

Sample Overview

The Department's Training and Youth Information Management System was also used as the sampling frame for the New Apprentices Survey whereby the sample of New Apprentices was randomly selected by DEST, stratified by New Apprenticeship Centre and included on the basis of having used a New Apprenticeships Centre in the last 6 months and having complete telephone contact details and a mailing address.

Table A5 over the page details selections by strata. As can be seen, three times the target number of interviews was selected per New Apprenticeships Centre, with the exception of contract ID 312, where the total population (190) of New Apprentices was provided. For this provider, the target was to maximise the yield from the available sample. As for the employer survey, two New Apprenticeship Centres (contract IDs 336 and 354) were excluded from the sample due to lack of sample availability.

In addition to sample specific to individual New Apprenticeships Centres, a separate sample of New Apprentices receiving Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) was provided.

There were only four quota groups where it was necessary to initiate the entire sample provided in order to complete the target number of interviews, and on average, it was only necessary to initiate calls to 2.3 selections to achieve each interview. The number of selections initiated can be used to guide the minimum number of initial selections for the 2005 wave of survey activity.

Primary Approach Letter

An approach letter was also used for the New Apprentices Survey. The first batch of letters was mailed approximately one week before the commencement of interviewing on 11 June, with the second batch⁵ mailed one week later. Victorian sample was initiated first in anticipation of issues with decreased propensity to respond in Victoria, and LAFHA sample was initiated early in anticipation of needing to make more calls to make contact with these sample members.

The telephone number at which contact would be attempted was included in the personalised letter. Where no telephone number was provided, or where a non-unique number was provided (typically the telephone number of the New Apprenticeships Centre or Employer), sample members were encouraged to call the Social Research Centre 1800 number to provide updated contact details.

Return to sender mail received by DEST was forwarded to The Social Research Centre for reconciliation with the original sample. In accordance with standard procedures, sample members with a returned approach letter were not removed from the sample, but were treated in the same way as other numbers that were randomly served for call initiation by the sample management system. The rationale for continuing to place a call to return to sender sample members is that, in some cases, a forwarding number for the sample member can be obtained from the current occupant.

⁵ Second batch mail fulfilment was subcontracted to World Class Direct Mail

Table A5: New Apprentice Survey - Sample provided at the regional contract level

Tender region	Contract ID	Target interviews	Total sample provided	Total sample initiated	Interviews achieved	Ratio - sample initiated to interviews completed
Project total		5940	17769	13491	5940	2.3
Hunter and N Coast	300	80	240	215	80	2.7
Sydney	301	80	240	153	80	1.9
Western NSW	302	80	240	162	80	2.0
Illawarra & SE NSW	303	80	240	216	80	2.7
Riverina	304	80	240	148	80	1.9
ACT	305	80	240	189	80	2.4
Perth	306	80	240	214	80	2.7
Adelaide	307	80	240	176	80	2.2
Brisbane	308	80	240	200	80	2.5
Adelaide	309	80	240	177	80	2.2
SA Country	310	80	240	139	80	1.7
Brisbane	311	80	240	195	80	2.4
Central Qld	312	80	190	165	80	2.1
Northern Qld	313	80	240	211	80	2.6
South Qld	314	80	240	182	80	2.3
Adelaide	315	80	240	168	80	2.1
Sydney	316	80	240	235	80	2.9
ACT	317	80	240	169	80	2.1
Melbourne	318	80	240	159	80	2.0
Illawarra & SE NSW	319	80	240	140	80	1.8
Perth	320	80	240	216	80	2.7
Central & SE WA	321	80	240	238	80	3.0
Southern WA	322	80	240	188	80	2.4
Northern WA	323	80	240	240	80	3.0
SA Country	324	80	240	159	80	2.0
Perth	325	80	240	237	80	3.0
Tasmania	326	80	240	171	80	2.1
Hunter and N Coast	327	80	240	147	80	1.8
Western NSW	328	80	240	159	80	2.0
Sydney	329	80	240	168	80	2.1
Hunter and N Coast	330	80	240	143	80	1.8
Western NSW	331	80	240	154	80	1.9
Riverina	332	80	240	206	80	2.6
Illawarra & SE NSW	333	80	240	178	80	2.2
ACT	334	80	240	202	80	2.5
Northern Qld	335	80	240	204	80	2.6
Geelong	337	80	240	153	80	1.9
Melbourne	338	80	240	197	80	2.5
Gippsland	339	80	240	156	80	2.0
Southern WA	340	80	240	163	80	2.0
Tasmania	341	80	240	185	80	2.3
Melbourne	342	80	240	187	80	2.3
Perth	343	80	240	231	80	2.9
Melbourne	344	80	240	207	80	2.6
Vic Ctrl Highlands	345	80	240	161	80	2.0
Geelong	346	80	240	180	80	2.3
Gippsland	347	80	240	152	80	1.9
Central Qld	348	80	240	159	80	2.0
Tasmania	349	80	240	151	80	1.9
Brisbane	350	80	240	185	80	2.3
Northern Qld	351	80	240	204	80	2.6
South Qld	352	80	240	192	80	2.4

Table A5 (cont): New Apprentice Survey - Sample provided at the regional contract level

Central Qld	353	80	240	198	80	2.5
Sydney	355	80	240	192	80	2.4
Riverina	356	80	240	180	80	2.3
Vic Ctrl Highlands	357	80	240	162	80	2.0
Brisbane	358	80	240	215	80	2.7
South Qld	359	80	240	202	80	2.5
Tasmania	360	80	240	149	80	1.9
Melbourne	361	80	240	169	80	2.1
Vic Ctrl Highlands	362	80	240	152	80	1.9
Geelong	363	80	240	146	80	1.8
Gippsland	364	80	240	170	80	2.1
Adelaide	365	80	240	194	80	2.4
Melbourne	366	80	240	239	80	3.0
Sydney	367	80	240	216	80	2.7
Adelaide	368	80	240	173	80	2.2
Vic Ctrl Highlands	369	80	240	173	80	2.2
Geelong	370	80	240	126	80	1.6
SA Country	371	80	240	187	80	2.3
Gippsland	372	80	240	148	80	1.9
Northern Territory	373	80	240	168	80	2.1
LAFHA	180	539	446	180	2.5	

Fieldwork Statistics

A total of 44,958 call attempts were made. The most frequent call outcome (Table A6) was no answer (26.3%), followed by appointments (22.6%), answering machines (22.1%), and interviews (13.2%).

Table A6: New Apprentices Survey - Analysis of all call attempts

Total numbers initiated	13491	
Completed interviews	5940	13.2%
No answer	11838	26.3%
Appointment made	10176	22.6%
Answering machine	9926	22.1%
Engaged	2022	4.5%
Telstra message, etc	1381	3.1%
Claims not to have had contact with NAC	960	2.1%
Stopped interview	880	2.0%
Wrong number / person not known	830	1.8%
Soft refusal / temporarily unable to complete	371	0.8%
Outright refusal (at introduction)	320	0.7%
Away duration	128	0.3%
Fax/Modem	97	0.2%
Language difficulty	66	0.1%
Duplicate number (claims to have done survey)	23	0.1%
Total attempts	44958	100.0%
Average calls per interview	7.6	
Ratio of numbers initiated to interviews achieved	2.3	
Average calls per number initiated	3.3	

An interview was achieved every 7.6 calls and the average number of calls for each number initiated was 3.3. Table A7 shows the final call result for all numbers initiated. An interview was achieved at 44.0% of numbers for which calls were initiated. This is referred to as the interview rate. To determine the response rate for the New Apprentices Survey, it is necessary to exclude unusable numbers (10.2% of numbers initiated), out of scope numbers (13.4%) and those where no contact could be established within the call cycle (19.8%). On this basis the final overall response rate, where response rate is defined as completed interviews (5940) as a proportion of sample members who could be contacted and were not identified as out of scope (7645), was 77.7%.

Table A7: Employer Survey - Analysis of final call outcomes

Total sample provided	17770		
Numbers initiated as % sample provided	75.9%		
Total numbers initiated (base)	13491		
		As % of numbers initiated	As % of in scope contacts
Unusable numbers			
Number disconnected / unable to track	10.0%		
Not a residential number	0.2%		
<i>A: Sub total unusable numbers</i>	<i>10.2%</i>		
Contacts - out of scope			
Claim not to have had contact with NAC	7.1%		
Person not known at number provided	6.1%		
Duplicate number (claims to have done survey)	0.2%		
<i>B: Subtotal contacts - out of scope</i>	<i>13.4%</i>		
Subtotal unusable numbers (A+B)	23.6%		
No contact (unresolved)			
Engaged	1.1%		
Answering machine	7.6%		
No answer	10.3%		
Fax/Modem	0.7%		
<i>C: Sub total no contact</i>	<i>19.8%</i>		
Contacts - in scope			
Completed interviews	44.0%		77.7%
Stopped interview	0.4%		0.7%
Outright refusal (at introduction)	2.3%		4.1%
Soft refusal / temporarily unable to complete	2.7%		4.8%
Away duration	0.9%		1.6%
Language difficulty	0.5%		0.8%
Appointment made	5.8%		10.3%
<i>D: Subtotal Contacts - in scope</i>	<i>56.7%</i>		<i>100.0%</i>

Table A8 shows that the interview rate varied by location, from 48.8% in Tasmania to 37.1% in WA. Those locations with a lower interview rate had the highest proportion of unusable numbers (29.9% in Queensland and 25.2% in WA). WA also had a high residual of unresolved appointments relative to other locations.

As for Employers, refusals were highest for the Melbourne tender region (9.4%), and highest for Victoria overall (7.5%).

Table A8: Employer Survey - Call outcomes by state and tender region

	Ratio - sample initiated to interviews completed	Interviews as % sample initiated	Refusals as % sample initiated	Non contacts as % sample initiated	Unusable numbers as % sample initiated
Total (all regions)	2.3	44.0%	5.0%	19.1%	23.6%
ACT	2.3	42.9%	3.2%	28.8%	19.1%
Sydney	2.3	43.4%	5.5%	17.0%	21.7%
Hunter and N Coast	2.1	47.5%	5.9%	12.5%	20.2%
Illawarra & SE NSW	2.2	44.9%	4.3%	15.2%	18.5%
Riverina	2.2	44.9%	6.0%	17.4%	22.7%
Western NSW	2.0	49.4%	6.5%	17.4%	22.1%
Total NSW	2.2	45.2%	5.3%	15.9%	20.6%
Northern Territory	2.1	47.6%	4.8%	10.7%	22.0%
Brisbane	2.5	40.3%	4.5%	19.1%	31.3%
Northern Qld	2.6	38.8%	2.7%	21.2%	32.3%
Central Qld	2.2	46.0%	2.3%	18.2%	28.2%
South Qld	2.4	41.7%	2.8%	23.8%	26.7%
Total QLD	2.4	41.4%	3.2%	20.5%	29.9%
Adelaide	2.2	45.0%	5.3%	19.3%	22.3%
SA Country	2.0	49.5%	5.6%	21.2%	17.5%
Total SA	2.1	46.6%	5.4%	20.0%	20.6%
Tasmania	2.1	48.8%	4.0%	25.8%	18.1%
Melbourne	2.4	41.5%	9.4%	14.2%	26.7%
Geelong	1.9	52.9%	5.1%	14.9%	20.0%
Gippsland	2.0	51.1%	7.2%	18.7%	19.6%
Vic Ctrl Highlands	2.0	49.4%	6.5%	17.4%	22.1%
Total VIC	2.1	47.4%	7.5%	15.9%	22.9%
Perth	2.8	35.6%	5.6%	20.6%	25.3%
Central & SE WA	3.0	33.6%	1.3%	26.1%	26.5%
Northern WA	2.7	37.0%	5.1%	19.4%	22.7%
Southern WA	2.2	45.6%	3.1%	19.9%	18.2%
Total WA	2.7	37.1%	4.0%	21.4%	25.2%
LAFHA	2.5	40.4%	3.6%	23.3%	29.6%