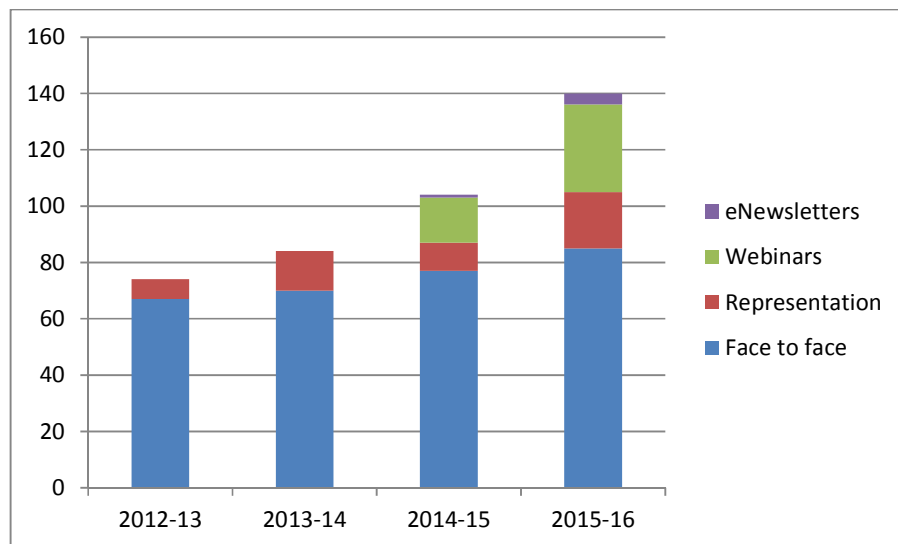


VSBC achievements over the past five years

These outcomes have occurred while maintaining our dispute resolution rate at mediation at more than 80%, and a customer satisfaction rating of 95%.

1. A doubling of engagement with small and medium businesses.

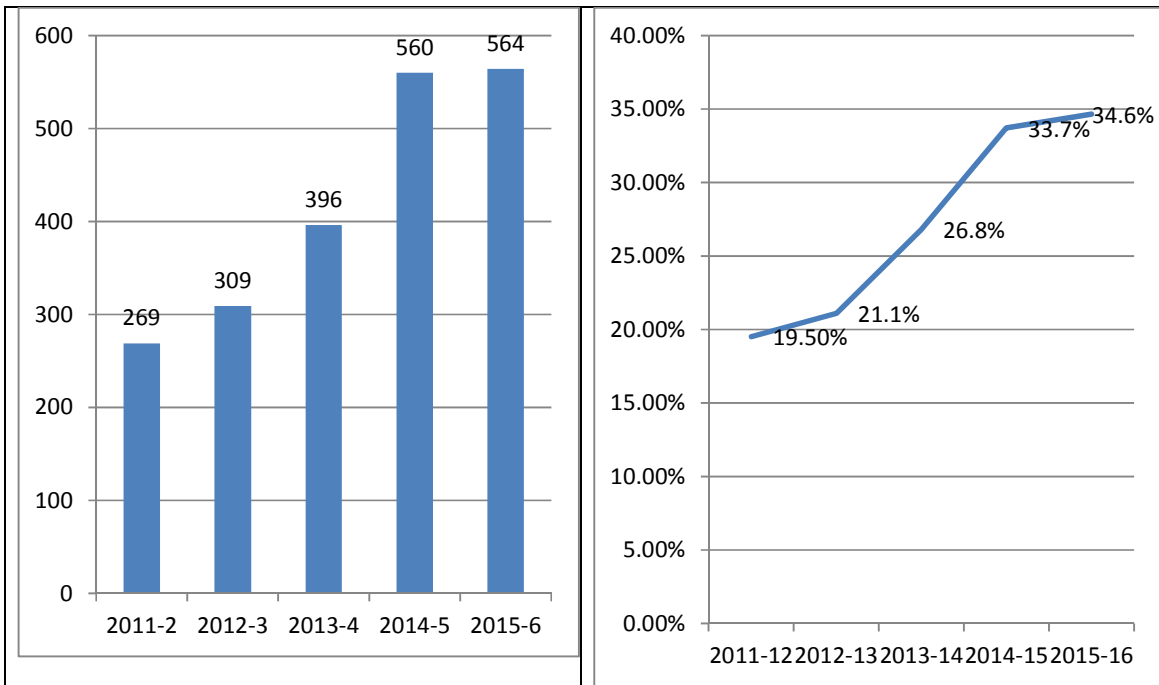
While face to face presentations to businesses and their advisers continued to be a major activity each year, we also expanded our representation at business awards and expos, introduced our webinar program, and commenced our eNewsletters. Outbound business engagement increased from 70 events in 2012-13 to 140 events in 2015-16.



2. An increased awareness of VSBC services

The growth in outbound business engagement events has contributed to increased awareness of VSBC services. This is best illustrated by applications for assistance with disputes under the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2003* – these disputes do not have to be lodged with the VSBC, but can be. Lodgement of these disputes is a good indicator of awareness of our services.

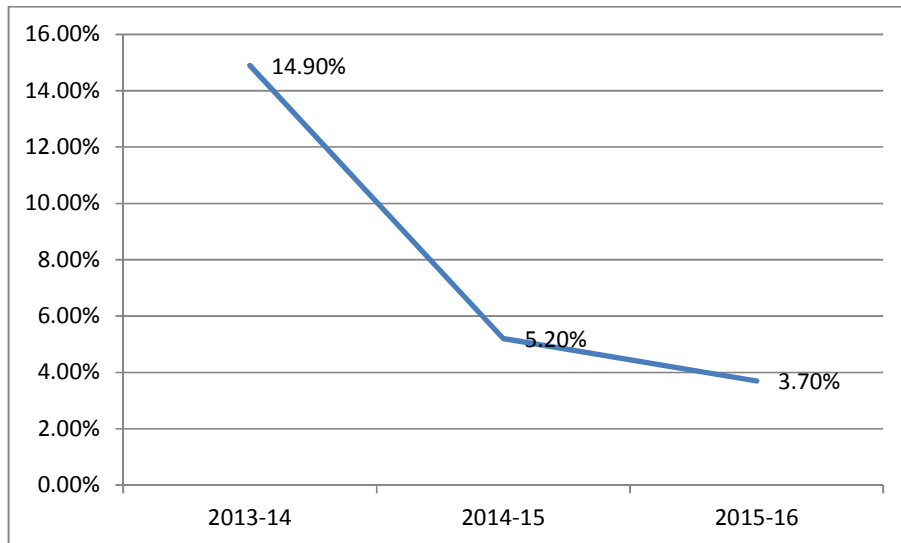
In the past five years, the number of such disputes has more than doubled, and the percentage of all dispute lodgements has increased to one-third.



3. A reduction in refusal rates by two thirds

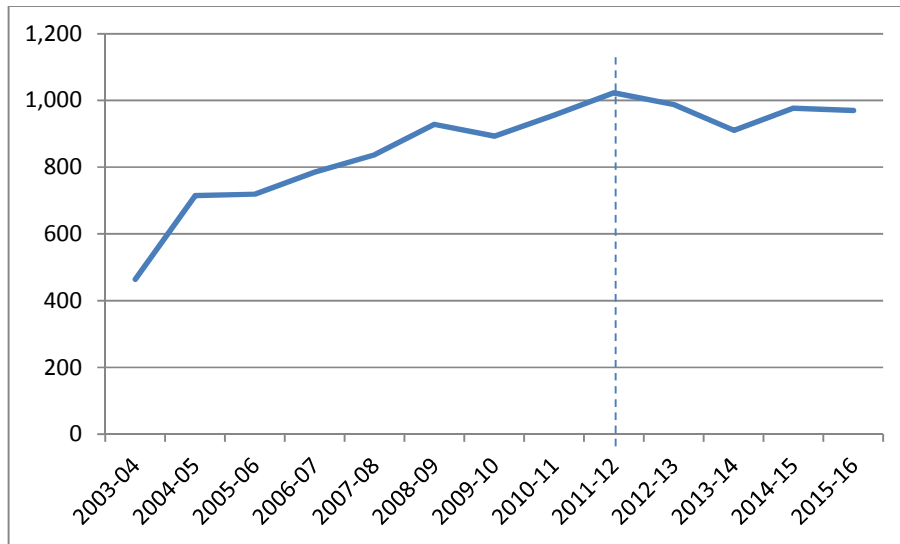
2014 amendments to the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2003* have had a significant impact on the willingness of respondent parties to engage with the VSBC under this Act. These amendments introduced a power to name a business in the VSBC Annual Report to Parliament if it was determined that the business had 'unreasonably refused' to engage in alternative dispute resolution with the Office. Before these changes, there was no consequence if a party refused to engage.

The following graph shows the significant reduction in refusals occurring since these changes.



4. Stopping the trend growth in retail lease disputes

Retail lease disputes must be referred to the VSBC for attempted resolution before a party can proceed to litigation at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Over the period 2004-5 to 2010-11, the average annual rate of growth in retail lease disputes lodged with the VSBC exceeded 5%. Since 2010-11, the volume of these disputes has stabilised, or slightly fallen.



The various information and education prevention measures introduced over this period, including more engagement with small businesses and their advisers, has likely been a contributing factor to the stabilisation in retail lease disputes over the past five years.