



# Annual Report

## 2011-2012

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# 1 From the Ombudsman

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## Improving noise outcomes in a growing industry

- 1.1 Aircraft noise is not going to go away and remains a key challenge for an industry that is forecasting high levels of growth. In Australia, the fly-in, fly-out sector is forecast to increase 27% by 2017<sup>1</sup>, along with passenger growth over the next five years expected to increase by 20%, and 50% by 2020<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2 This may seem a bleak prospect for those living near an airport or under a flight path, but it does not have to be the case that the aircraft noise situation necessarily worsens with the growth of aviation activity. Innovative and strategic solutions are available, particularly in the long term. This will involve the clever use of improving technologies in aircraft and engine design, airport and aeronautical infrastructure, air traffic management, and even in the planning, design and construction of buildings in areas affected by aircraft noise. Sensible and strategic land-use planning and management will also play a role.
- 1.3 Complaints offer a direct insight into issues and opportunities to improve the noise outcome. It is the role of Airservices Australia (Airservices), as the noise data and complaints specialist, and the industry as a whole, to ensure that opportunities to reduce noise impacts are fully explored and communicated. While it is important not to see complaints as determining priorities or key issues, they are a useful indicator and are also an excellent potential source of ideas.
- 1.4 The role of complaints in driving long-term change comes through systemic issue reviews and using complaints as inputs to other review processes, such as Noise Abatement Procedure reviews and flight path reviews. For example, all three of the reviews undertaken by the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman's (ANO) office have drawn heavily on the information received through complaints, even though the individual complaints may have been resolved through an explanation of why there are no short-term changes possible.

## What's the point of complaining?

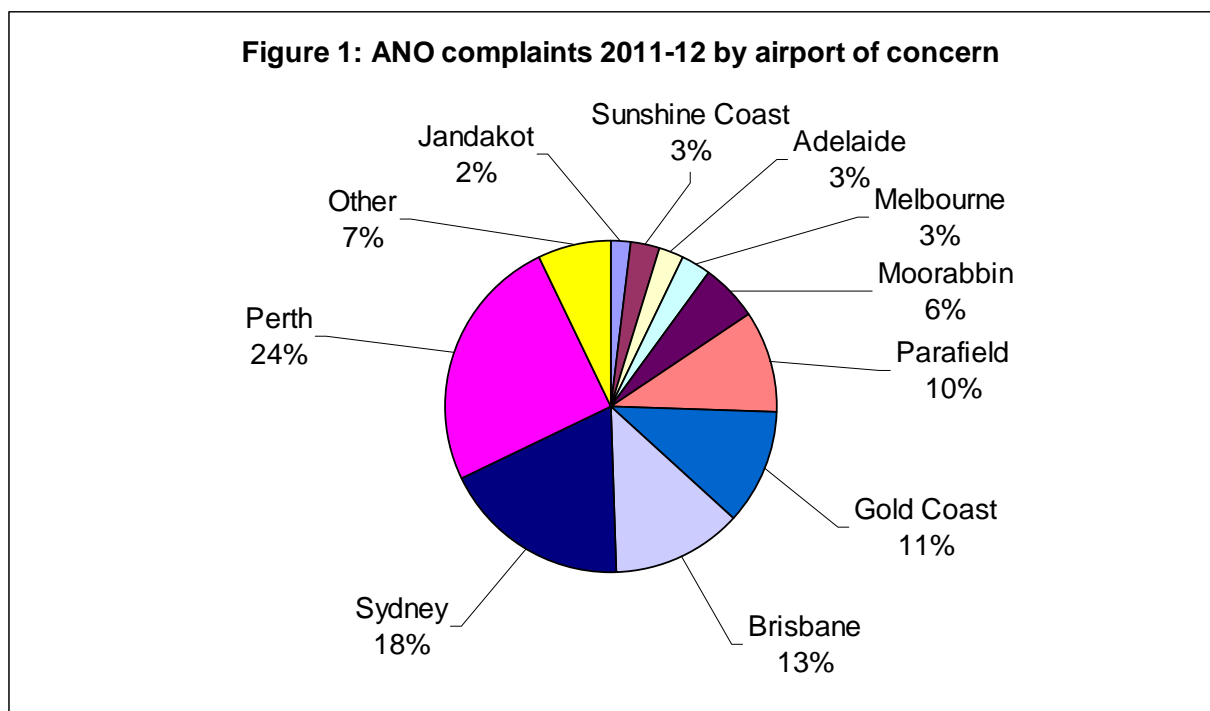
- 1.5 Complaints can play a key role in informing the need for change. This concept was at the heart of the first formal report by my office, *A review of complaint handling – Airservices Australia*. At the start of July 2011, Airservices had yet to action any of the recommendations from that review. Twelve months later, all but one have been actioned, which is a credit to the organisation and has laid the foundation for more effective resolution of complaints.

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<sup>1</sup> Airservices Australia, Aviation industry focuses on demand, capacity and efficiency, media release, Airservices Australia, Canberra, 2012, viewed 8 August 2012 < <http://newsroom.airservicesaustralia.com/releases/e9775192-b6c0-4093-918b-99a507c45da4> >

<sup>2</sup> S Creedy, 'Air traffic numbers to rocket by 2030', Australian, 25 November 2011, viewed 8 August 2012 < <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/aviation/air-traffic-numbers-to-rocket-by-2030/story-e6frg95x-1226205217364> >

- 1.6 The remaining recommendation to upgrade the complaints database system is underway. It will deliver a key tool to underpin and support the cultural shift to focus on issues and seek resolution for complaints. My office continues to monitor the ongoing implementation of new procedures to ensure that new ways of working are not only documented, but are effective, lead to improved complaints management and ultimately deliver better noise management.
- 1.7 The ANO office received 109 complaints in the 2011-12 year, compared with 101 in the first nine months of operation (1 September 2010 – 30 June 2011). While complaints to the office are commonly phrased in terms of the aircraft noise issues experienced by the complainant, in essence the complaint is about dissatisfaction with how these noise issues have been managed. Under my charter I can investigate Airservices' management of aircraft noise issues, however, it is notable that a coordinated industry approach will be a key to improving public understanding and acceptance of aircraft noise.
- 1.8 It is interesting to consider why particular locations may be more highly represented in the complaints data than other locations where communities live close to an airport. The ANO has noted a coincidence of complaints with Master Planning processes (e.g. Gold Coast, Parafield, Moorabbin). It is likely that the heightened awareness and debate in the community about airport plans translates into increased concern about aircraft noise issues.
- 1.9 Perth and Sydney have been the areas of greatest concern in the complaints received by the ANO in 2011-12 (see Figure 1). As a result they were the focus of two ANO reviews during 2011-12. These reviews found opportunities for improved information about, and public accountability for, air traffic management decisions that affect aircraft noise outcomes.



1.10 As an Ombudsman, I am keen to ensure that improved complaint handling becomes an industry wide objective. With this in mind my office has supported an initiative by Airservices and the Australian Airports Association to improve information about, and understanding of, aircraft noise. A number of airports have very good publications on some aspects of aircraft noise but it is not necessarily easy for the public to locate the information. For example, it would be difficult for Sydney residents interested in improving the noise insulation of their homes to find the excellent material on this subject available from the Perth Airport website. Sharing of resources will deliver a much-improved outcome and assist Airservices in improving public understanding of aircraft noise.

### Why didn't someone explain it clearly?

1.11 In the short and medium term, there is a lot to be said for improving aircraft noise management through improving the availability and accessibility of information about aircraft noise and its impacts. This has been a key focus of the ANO office over the past twelve months. We produced two reports on improving aircraft noise information presentation and distribution.

1.12 The ANO *Review of Aircraft Noise Information Presentation and Complaint Resolution: Perth* considered the information available about aircraft noise. Although the focus of that report was information and complaint handling for Perth, its recommendations were of relevance nationally. The recommendations can be summarised as proposing a more active approach to presenting information on aircraft noise, with a focus on plain English, clear presentation and the sharing of information nationally in the form of fact sheets, web pages and reports. Reporting should include analysis of the data that seeks to find solutions or improve the public's understanding of why suggested changes are not viable.

1.13 The ANO *Assessment of Aircraft noise information (Sydney) – Airservices Australia* built on the above report and addressed some specific areas of concern in the information available. While three of the nine recommendations were specific to Sydney the remainder are applicable across the country. As Airservices implements the recommendations from these two reports the attention of the ANO office will turn to the effectiveness of the changes.

1.14 The office will also monitor Airservices' consultation processes. The ANO or a representative has attended at least one meeting of most of the Community Airport Consultative Groups set up by airports around the country following the Government's National Aviation Policy White Paper (published in 2009)<sup>3</sup>. The office provides feedback to Airservices on its participation in those forums.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, National Aviation Policy: White Paper: flight path to the future, Canberra, December 2009, viewed 8 August 2012  
<<http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/nap/>>

## What's next?

1.15 In 2012-13 the key priorities for the ANO office will include:

1.15.1 *Pursuing individual complaints.* This will continue to be a prime role for the office. As Airservices improves its management of complaints the role of the office in individual complaints will be increasingly targeted on the most difficult or complex issues and also on some of the more difficult complainant behaviours.

1.15.2 *Following up on the ANO's first three reports.* While the recommendations in the first three reports are straightforward their implementation is not necessarily so. The first 21 months of the operation of the ANO has seen three major reports and 34 recommendations. The coming year will see the office monitoring the effective implementation of those recommendations by Airservices.

1.15.3 *Supporting cultural change.* The recommendations from the three reports issued involve some significant changes in the approach to noise complaints, and information provision, by many parts of Airservices. Significant change to how the organisation views its role in managing noise complaints can mean significant change for the way many staff approach their day-to-day work, and therefore requires substantial cultural change. The ANO office will work to support this change by assisting in training, providing presentations and working with key managers.

1.16 At times it can be difficult to pursue aircraft noise issues with Airservices when the prime role of the agency is, and must always remain, safety. It is critical that Airservices should not lose sight of this overriding priority. At the same time this priority should not overwhelm other issues. Once safety has been addressed, Airservices must also address other key issues. The agency has a strong record in working with the aviation industry to deliver improved efficiency through best practice air traffic management. Efficiency improvements have resulted in reduced delays as a result of sound traffic management, and have also resulted in significant improvement in fuel economy and emission reductions.

1.17 While these issues are very important and must continue to be priorities, it is worth noting that aircraft noise is likely to be one of the biggest constraints on future growth and development of the aviation sector. This is evident in the current debate about a second Sydney airport, and has also been the subject of commentary in various forums<sup>4,5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> GreenairOnline.com, Despite the focus on reducing carbon emissions, aircraft noise remains the key environmental concern for airports, GreenAir Communications, London, 18 May 2012, viewed 9 August 2012 <<http://www.greenaironline.com/news.php?viewStory=1471>>

<sup>5</sup> A Gittens, 'An airport perspective on aircraft noise and the role of ANSPs', CANSO Airspace, vol. 17, Quarter 2 2012, pp. 14-15, viewed 8 August 2012 <<http://issuu.com/canso/docs/airspace17>>

1.18 Given the political significance of aircraft noise issues, and the substantial confusion that exists in the community about what is and is not possible in managing aircraft noise, it is vital that Airservices provides leadership on this issue. Airservices should allocate priority to applying its very substantial expertise in air traffic management, and its strong relationships across the aviation industry, to support change that will improve noise outcomes and improve understanding of the problems and constraints.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Brent', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ron Brent  
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman  
9 August 2012

## 2 About the ANO

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### In the beginning...

- 2.1 The ANO has been established to conduct independent administrative reviews of Airservices and how it handles aircraft noise-related activities, such as the handling of complaints, community consultation, and the presentation and distribution of aircraft noise information.
- 2.2 The function was proposed in the Australian government's Aviation White Paper *Flight Path to the Future*<sup>6</sup>, released on 16 December 2009.

### Who is the ANO team?

- 2.3 Mr Ron Brent was appointed as the first ANO and started on 1 September 2010 for a three year appointment.
- 2.4 He is supported by a small team, comprising two senior advisers, a research officer and an administrative officer. All ANO staff work part-time, and the office is generally staffed during Canberra weekday business hours.

### Governance

- 2.5 The ANO is independent of Airservices' executive management structures, reporting directly to its board on aircraft noise management matters.
- 2.6 Following a period of consultation, in April 2012 an amended *ANO Charter*<sup>7</sup> was published, which incorporated minor amendments to better reflect the on-the-ground operating experience of the ANO. The new charter clarified a range of administrative matters (for example, in the circumstances of a temporary vacancy) and brought the Charter more in line with best practice governance arrangements for Ombudsmen. The Charter guarantees the ongoing independence of the ANO.

### What's our approach?

- 2.7 The ANO seeks to fix problems and foster accountability, in the context of the broader question:

*“Could a better noise outcome be reasonably and practically pursued?”*

We review and pursue issues arising from individual complaints and also conduct systemic issue reviews where the matters reach beyond an individual concern. Three of these reviews have resulted in formal reports including recommendations to the Airservices Board. Other systemic issue reviews informed our responses to a group of complainants affected by the same issue.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, National Aviation Policy: White Paper: flight path to the future, Canberra, December 2009, viewed 8 August 2012 <<http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/nap/>>

<sup>7</sup> Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, Aircraft Noise Ombudsman Charter, Canberra, approved 11 April 2012, viewed 8 August 2012 < [http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/ANO\\_2012-Charter.pdf](http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/ANO_2012-Charter.pdf) >



See our *Report on Fingal Head Aircraft Noise – Sept 2011*<sup>8</sup>, or **Case Study 1: Some planes are just noisier than others**, below.

## CASE STUDY 1 Some planes are just noisier than others

When a number of complaints from Parafield to the ANO specifically mentioned a twin engine aircraft that seemed to be louder than other training aircraft, we looked into the issue holistically. After substantial investigation, including reviewing complaints made to Airservices over several months and discussions with stakeholders, the ANO was able to provide all complainants from Parafield with a better explanation of the noise impacts, and what steps the aircraft operator and the Airport were taking to improve the noise outcome.

It turned out not to be as simple as ‘some planes are just noisier than others’. Several factors contributed to a change in the experience of aircraft noise in the community, particularly from one type of twin-engine aircraft. These were:

- One of the training providers replaced the engines on seven aircraft with noisier engines. This change was considered necessary because the original engines experienced a number of ‘uncommanded shutdowns’ (meaning that the engines cut out while in flight without warning).
- In 2010 an incident on landing led to a change in arrival procedures that resulted in the aircraft flying with a noisier landing configuration from a point earlier in the circuit. Homes near the end of the circuit are affected by this extra noise. Given the variation in circuit patterns, various areas around the airport are affected by the change in procedures.
- Increasing numbers of students have meant that there is more twin-engine training than before.

The ANO investigated the option of engine silencers, and determined this was not a practical solution. The ANO also engaged with the operators and the airport, who are actively looking for opportunities to improve the noise issues. Improvements being pursued include:

- Amending the Fly Friendly Policy - this is a voluntary code of conduct for the operators. It is designed to reduce the impact of operations on the community. Under the agreement, operators will try to limit their circuit training activities to finish earlier in the evenings when possible (by 10pm on weeknights and by 9pm on weekends) and start later on Sunday mornings by half an hour (i.e. starting after 8.30am). Circuit training would also be restricted on key public holidays, including no circuit training on Christmas Day or New Year's Day, and on Anzac Day circuit training would not start before 9am.
- Working with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to explore whether the circuit arrival procedures could be amended so that the change to the noisier configuration occurs later in the circuit (while still meeting safety requirements). Only preliminary discussions have been held between the operators, CASA and the Airport on this matter as yet but it may lead to a further small improvement.

These are changes at the margins, but every change is a step towards better balancing the impacts on the community with the business demands of the operators.

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<sup>8</sup> Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, Report on Fingal Head Aircraft Noise, Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, Canberra, September 2011 (version 2), viewed 8 August 2012  
<[http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/aircraft\\_noise\\_report\\_fingal\\_head\\_sep2011\\_v2.pdf](http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/aircraft_noise_report_fingal_head_sep2011_v2.pdf)>

2.8 Much of the work of the ANO is done by direct discussion with Airservices and other aviation industry organisations. This does lead to the disadvantage that not all of the ANO's achievements and influence are visible to the public. On the other hand, the prospects for finding compromise solutions are much higher when Airservices (and other stakeholders) can focus resources on constructively working towards improving the management of aircraft noise issues. At the end of the day, the ANO measures success by improved outcomes rather than by public recognition of the role.

### 3 Complaint handling

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#### Review of Complaints Handling

- 3.1 In February 2011, the ANO published its first report following a major review of Airservices' handling of aircraft noise complaints<sup>9</sup>. It contained 18 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Board of Airservices.
- 3.2 In February 2012, the ANO published an assessment of Airservices' response to the review<sup>10</sup>.
- 3.3 Implementation of the recommendations by Airservices has continued throughout 2011-12, with all but one recommendation now actioned. While recommendations have been actioned by Airservices, the ANO considers it appropriate to monitor application of new processes or initiatives to ensure effective implementation. See **Attachment 1** for a full summary of all recommendations and their status at 30 June 2012.

#### S N A P S H O T 1

##### Review of Complaints Handling: Airservices Australia February 2011

The main themes of this review were for Airservices to:

- Shift emphasis from recording complaints to resolving complaints
- Focus on issues and number of complainants rather than number of contacts
- Formalise procedures, training and systems to support these new ways of operating

There was a total of 18 recommendations made – 17 actioned (with implementation being monitored for 9 of the 17)

It is pleasing that some improvement is being noted by those that make complaints. In May, a complainant wrote to the ANO saying:

*"I also wish to express my thanks to you and ASA [Airservices] for the respectful and thorough way you handled [the] complaint... I will continue to encourage people to report their noise concerns because there is an [improved] complaints process and if they are dissatisfied then they can seek redress through the Ombudsman's office. It's a good message to be able to give so thank you to you and your team."*

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<sup>9</sup> Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, Review of Complaint Handling – Airservices Australia, Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, February 2011, viewed 8 August 2012

<[http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/ANO\\_Review\\_of\\_Complaint\\_Handling.pdf](http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/ANO_Review_of_Complaint_Handling.pdf)>

<sup>10</sup> Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, ANO assessment of Airservices Australia's response to the Review of Complaints Handling, Aircraft Noise Ombudsman, Canberra, February 2012, viewed 8 August 2012

<[http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/ANO\\_Annual\\_Review\\_Report\\_feb2012.pdf](http://www.ano.gov.au/reportsstats/reports/ANO_Annual_Review_Report_feb2012.pdf)>

3.4 The ANO is continuing to monitor the quality of responses provided by Airservices, and where appropriate provides feedback. It is important that the ANO ensures the recommendations are implemented effectively. It is evident that this is also important to Airservices. With this in mind, two of the new positions created in Airservices' Noise Complaints and Information Service team have quality management as a key function of their role.

**What happens to ANO complaints?**

3.5 When a complaint is received by the ANO it is reviewed in light of the core functions under the charter:

- Was the complaint handled well?
- Was appropriate and well presented information made available to the complainant?
- Was consultation adequate?

The context of all these considerations is whether or not a better noise outcome might be reasonably and practically pursued. See **Attachment 2** for a summary of the ANO complaint statistics.

3.6 Airservices and the aviation industry as a whole have been managing aircraft noise issues for a long time. As a result, many of the obvious improvements that can be made to reduce aircraft noise have been made. The continuing rapid growth of the industry further limits the scope for significantly improving aircraft noise outcomes. Consequently, opportunities for change are generally at the margins, tweaking the balance between the competing expectations of communities around airports and a growing, competitive aviation industry.

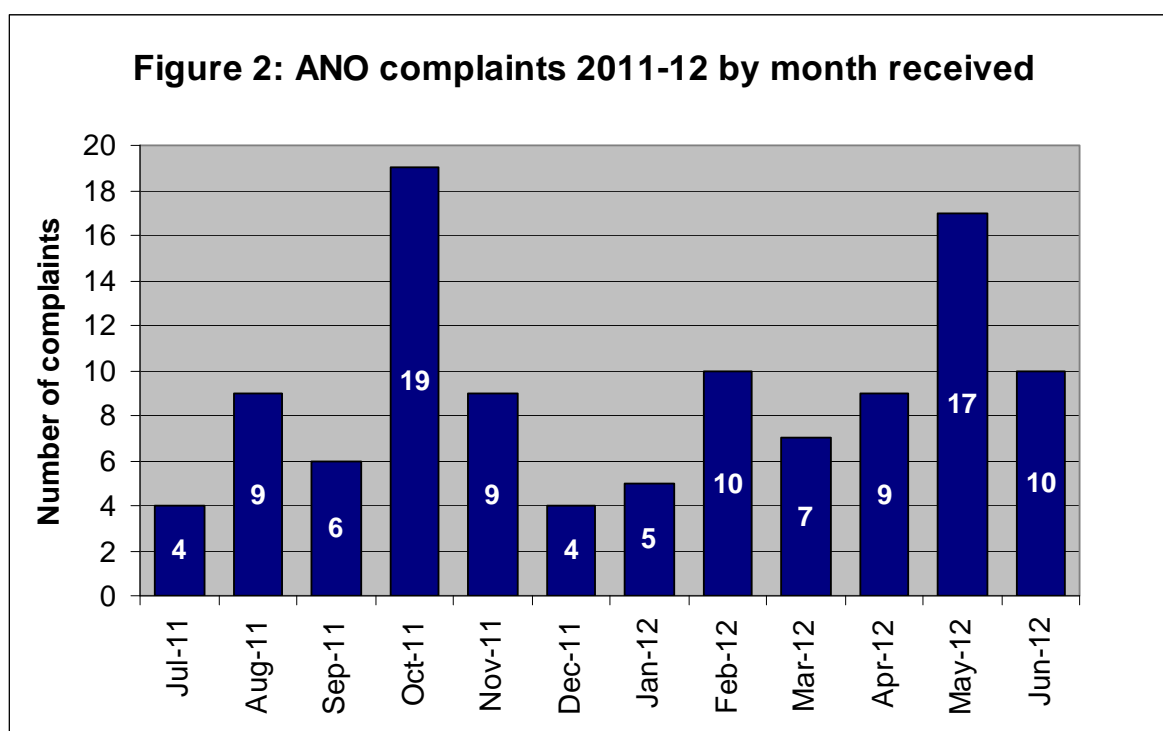
3.7 The result has been that most ANO complaints have been resolved through the provision of a detailed explanation of the issues and clarification of why there is no prospect of a change in the short term. In 2011-12, from a total of 66 complaints reviewed and closed by the ANO, 58 were resolved through explanation only with no change possible. Of these, however, 30 contained issues that were the subject of systemic issue reviews (Sydney, Perth, Fingal Head and Parafield).

Complaints reviewed and closed:	66
No change possible - explanation provided	58
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	2
Change adopted by Airport operator	5
Change adopted by Operator	1

3.8 A further 12 complaints were reviewed in the period, but are not included in the above statistics as the cases were not closed as at 30 June 2012. This is because after reviewing a case and sending a final response to the complainant, the ANO office keeps the case open for three weeks to allow for any clarification sought by the complainant.

## How many complaints have there been?

- 3.9 In the 2011-12 financial year, the ANO received 109 new complaints. The variation in the number of complaints received per month is between four and nineteen, with the average around nine (see Figure 2). These are small numbers which means that, for some, thorough investigations can be undertaken and systemic issues arising are pursued.



## Why is it taking so long?

- 3.10 The average time from lodgement to closure for complaints closed by the ANO in 2011-12 is 58 days. Allowing for weekends, public holidays and the three week 'opportunity for clarification' period for the complaints that were reviewed, this translates to approximately 28 working days.
- 3.11 This figure reflects the complexity of many of the cases that come to the ANO. At the same time it also reflects the need to obtain information from Airservices and in some cases from operators, airports, and other agencies.
- 3.12 It is worth noting that averages do not always paint a clear picture. In this case the average time for closure is increased as a result of a few very long standing complaints such as that in **Case Study 2: Why can't the planes fly over there?**, below.

## **C** Why can't the planes fly over there?

**A** One complaint that was lodged with the ANO in November 2010 remains open. This case, while not yet resolved, has been a catalyst for some significant procedural reform in Airservices and was a case study in the [Perth review](#) (pg 26-7 "Move Flight Path off Roleystone").

**S** The complainant asked why the aircraft flying over her home could not fly over the less populated land to the east. Originally Airservices assumed that this could not happen because of the complexity of the airspace around Perth. A more critical review showed that it might be possible after all.

**T** While this progress has been positive, the ANO keeps the case open pending Airservices providing an acceptable response to the original issue of concern – to be able to provide this requires a comprehensive investigation by Airservices of a proposal to relocate a flight path into Perth.

**U** It is likely to be many more months before resolution is achieved – whether that is through implementation of a change or provision of a clear evidence-based explanation for why changes cannot be pursued.

**Y**

**2**

- 3.13 Technological advances over time have contributed to better noise outcomes. In a highly technical industry that has a long term strategic planning horizon, there is a temptation to wait for long term technological solutions to meet the noise related challenges. However, the ANO has been encouraging Airservices, and its partners in the aviation industry to look for small opportunities and improvements that they can make in the short to medium term. In particular, by drawing on the feedback received through complaints and community consultation processes, relatively small changes can be identified that will make a difference, even if sometimes quite marginal. See for example **Case Study 1: Some planes are just noisier than others** (p7) and **Case Study 3: Midnight takeoffs lower and louder**, below.

## **C** Midnight take-offs lower and louder

**A** A resident of Dalkeith, WA, complained that she had made numerous complaints to Airservices about aircraft noise at anti social hours disturbing her family. One particular flight at around midnight often seemed particularly low and intrusive. Airservices had advised her that they only had bad news as the flights would continue and there is nothing they can do but log her complaints.

**S** The ANO investigated the complaint and noted one regular flight was significantly lower than other departures, and this was especially intrusive because of the noise-sensitivity of its departure time at around midnight. The ANO asked Airservices to undertake a review to see if there was a viable option to improve the noise outcome, for example by using a steeper climb gradient? After some delay, Airservices did contact the airline involved, which responded positively, agreeing to coordinate a trial flight using greater thrust in takeoff to reach a higher altitude sooner.

**T** Early analysis suggests that at 20 kilometres from the airport, the aircraft was approximately 1,000 feet higher than its usual height for this flight. However, further analysis is required to determine if this represents an overall improvement considering factors such as the increase in fuel burn and associated carbon emissions, the noise impact for those residents closer to the airport, and whether the change in noise further out was a significant improvement.

**U** While the outcome of these investigations is yet to be determined, the positive response by the airline highlights the value in Airservices ensuring complaints are passed on to stakeholders and that they are given the chance to respond.

**Y**

**3**

## 4 Information Provision

### Perth and Sydney Reviews

- 4.1 The ANO released two reviews focussed on information provision, prompted by issues raised in complaints. The focus of the reviews was on the two locations that together represent over 40% of complaints to the ANO (that is, Perth and Sydney). Despite this focus, most of the recommendations have national application. Airservices accepted all recommendations: seven from the Perth review and nine from the Sydney Review.

#### SNAPSHOT 2

##### Review of Aircraft Noise Presentation and Complaint Resolution: Perth November 2011

The main themes of this review were for Airservices to:

- Improve public understanding about aircraft noise by improving presentation of information
- Take accountability for decisions (including decisions not to make change) that affect the noise situation and communicate these
- Engage in a coordinated industry approach to developing and presenting information

Total of 7 recommendations made – 4 actioned (implementation being monitored for 3 of the 4)

##### Assessment of Aircraft Noise Information: Sydney March 2012

The main themes of this review were for Airservices to:

- Provide more textual and qualitative assessments of aircraft noise in reports
- Improve the clarity and timeliness of information provided, including linking to applicable sources of information
- Provide fact sheets and reports about key issues

Total of 9 recommendations made – 3 actioned

- 4.2 Airservices has been responsive to these reviews and has enhanced the material available on its website and in printed materials provided at community consultation meetings. There is work underway on improving the routine reports and there are further opportunities for Airservices to enhance its presentation of information about initiatives to improve noise outcomes.

### Improving ANO information

- 4.3 In 2011-12, the ANO made small improvements to the information provided on its website. The useful links page was expanded and additional sources of information were identified. Through 2012-13, more detailed reference material will be made available.



## 5 Consultation

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- 5.1 The ANO or a representative has attended a number of the Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group (or equivalent) meetings across the 2011-12 year. We have also met with various aviation stakeholders, including airport management, aircraft operators, industry bodies, and community representative groups.
- 5.2 Face-to-face meetings with aircraft noise stakeholders are important for the ANO team to better understand the industry and community perspectives. They have also provided an opportunity for the ANO to raise awareness of its role, approach and the value of complaints.
- 5.3 Attendance at such meetings has also enabled the ANO to monitor Airservices' community engagement and consultation in action, in line with our charter accountabilities. The ANO has provided feedback to Airservices staff involved in these meetings, although no formal recommendations have been made on consultation issues specifically. Feedback has included the following:
- The manner in which information is presented
  - The opportunity that consultation meetings present for active distribution of fact sheets and other materials
  - The need for clarity when presenting complex air traffic management matters to the public in terms that they can understand
  - The need to be proactive in taking on feedback from and presenting information to these forums.
- 5.4 In response to feedback from the community and input from the ANO, Airservices released an update to its *Communication and Consultation Protocol*<sup>11</sup> in August 2011. This document provides a framework for improved community engagement on Airservices' activities, including earlier and better consultation on changes that have the potential to affect communities. In the coming financial year, the ANO will review Airservices' application of its commitments in this protocol in relation to aircraft noise management.

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<sup>11</sup> Airservices Australia, Communication and consultation protocol, Airservices Australia, Canberra, 2011, viewed 9 August 2012 <[http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/Communication-and-Consultation-Protocol\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/Communication-and-Consultation-Protocol_WEB.pdf)>

## 6 Financial Results

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- 6.1 The ANO operates autonomously in managing its financial accountabilities. In line with the ANO Charter, although funding is provided by Airservices, the ANO independently determines how funds and resources are allocated.
- 6.2 In 2011-12, the total costs of the office were \$550,800 which includes all staff salaries and entitlements, travel, and administrative overhead costs.

## Attachment 1 ANO assessment of action on Review Recommendations

Complaints Handling Review	
Recommendation	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>Airservices should amend its systems and procedures to support the NEU seeking a suitable remedy for those complaints where it may be possible to improve the noise outcome, and ensure follow-up on such opportunities. It is acknowledged that an improved noise outcome may only be feasible for a small minority of the total noise complaints received.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>Airservices should amend the objectives of the NEU, as stated in the NEU procedures, to include 'complaint resolution through the provision of more targeted information'. In addition, Airservices should develop and implement systems and tools to assist with this new objective.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 3:</b></p> <p>Airservices should make a senior manager accountable for capturing, recording and tracking through to implementation, noise improvement opportunities arising from complaints.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 4:</b></p> <p>Airservices should review the resource requirement for the NEU when implementing the changes recommended in this review.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 5:</b></p> <p>Airservices, in adopting the other recommendations included within this review, should amend the name of the NEU to Noise Complaints Unit (NCU) or similar to reflect the unit's role in resolving complaints.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 6:</b></p> <p>Airservices should review and expand their written procedures and protocols for responding to unreasonable complainant behaviours.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 7:</b></p> <p>Airservices should update and enhance their suite of fact sheets to cover all major airports in Australia and the key aircraft noise issues of interest to the general public. Airservices should publish these on their website, as well as disseminate them to specific complainants as appropriate. In addition, the remainder of the Airservices noise information website should be reviewed and updated where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will monitor and support the development of fact sheets for major airports and will provide input to improve the content of fact sheets that have already been published.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 8:</b></p> <p>Airservices should amend NEU procedures and other relevant instructions to ensure that ownership of all noise complaints remains with the NEU (or those responsible for the NEU). Where complainants are put in direct contact with ATCs, the ATCs should be advised of the requirement for all communication to be reported to and managed by the NEU. Where complaints are handled by higher levels of management or other parts of Airservices (such as the Government and International Relations branch for approaches via the Minister's Office or the Department of Infrastructure and Transport) the feedback loop must be closed so that the NEU can ensure consistency in their responses to complainants.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>

Complaints Handling Review	
Recommendation	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 9:</b>  Airservices should amend NEU procedures, and other relevant organisational instructions, to:</p> <p>a) have all complaints logged and managed by the NEU, even where the NEU judges that the matter can best be handled by direct dealings between the complainant and staff from another part of Airservices, and</p> <p>b) allow the NEU to instigate an investigation of any complaint or consider systemic issues arising from any complaint, where this is appropriate.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 10:</b>  Airservices should engage actively with other agencies with cross-over accountabilities in aircraft noise issues, and also with airports and aircraft operators as required, to ensure an improved and integrated response is provided to complainants.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 11:</b>  Airservices should establish a training package, and relevant supporting material, to assist managers and key decision makers in recognising the value of complaints and the manner in which they can contribute to system and service improvements.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will monitor the roll out of training.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 12:</b>  Airservices should implement processes for the NEU that ensure investigations are conducted whenever there is a possibility of individual, systemic or emerging issues being identified that could feed into improved aircraft noise management.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 13:</b>  Airservices should place greater focus on identifying, recording and reporting issues in addition to reporting the numbers of complaints and complainants. The key indicators that should inform an understanding of complaints should be the issues raised, and the number of persons who have complained about those issues, rather than the number of times individuals have contacted the NEU about a particular issue.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will monitor the new initiatives as they are rolled out across all public reports.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 14:</b>  Airservices should develop clear messages on key issues that provide a realistic picture of what is, and what is not, likely to be achievable. Matters of government policy should be cleared in advance with the Minister.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will monitor the continued development of fact sheets and clarity of information provided to the public.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 15:</b>  Airservices should implement processes to ensure that issues identified through complaints are followed up, through the process of consideration, decision and where appropriate, implementation.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will monitor the application of the new processes.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 16:</b>  Airservices should give priority to the replacement of the NEU complaints database with a system capable of providing more sophisticated analysis of complaint data.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 17:</b>  Airservices should develop a formal, written and published instruction on recording relevant statistical details about issues, complaints, complainants and contacts.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.
<p><b>Complaints Handling Recommendation 18:</b>  Airservices should develop a standard clause relating to the minimisation of noise, for inclusion in operational Letters of Agreement with aircraft operators, where appropriate.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b> The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.

Perth Review	
Recommendation	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>In its ongoing development of public reports on aircraft noise, Airservices should review the reports with the aim of making the reports as easy as possible to understand. This should include using 'plain English' in place of technical terminology, considering the usefulness of averages in cases of a wide spread of data, incorporating some analysis of the data, and establishing a simple system for obtaining public feedback on reports.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>Airservices, in addition to implementing the recommendations from the ANO's Complaint Handling Review, should continue to improve information provided to the public and industry, through an increased focus on complaint issues and identifying opportunities for possible improvements in noise outcomes. Public and industry reporting on complaints should provide analysis in addition to the data.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 3:</b></p> <p>Airservices should undertake regular reviews of the information provided on its website and in printed material to ensure that the material is current, relevant to the audience, and responds to feedback from stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 4:</b></p> <p>Airservices should further develop its capacity to provide comprehensive information on all aspects of aircraft noise through NCIS as well as via fact sheets, and its website. This could include such matters as explaining flight paths and why planes fly where they do, explaining changes in air traffic over time (even where there has been no specific action to bring about that change), and explaining the processes for determining the location of aircraft noise monitors and the role of those monitors. It should also include a process for reporting publicly on initiatives to improve noise outcomes, including cases where those initiatives result in a conclusion that improvements cannot be achieved.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 5:</b></p> <p>Where complaints/enquiries relate to matters for Government, Airservices should advise complainants of this and, where possible, refer to available material which presents the Government's position. Where complainants wish to pursue their complaints with the Department, Airservices should assist in transferring the complainant directly to the Department.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p> <p>The ANO will now monitor the application of the new processes.</p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 6:</b></p> <p>Airservices should develop an information package that presents an accurate aircraft noise information picture for Perth, and make this available on its website and in other formats as appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Actioned by Airservices</b></p>
<p><b>Perth Review Recommendation 7:</b></p> <p>Airservices should ensure that it has a clearly defined assessment process for considering possible changes to improve noise outcomes, which should include appropriate public reporting. Such reporting could encompass the WARRP Post Implementation Review.</p>	<p>The ANO notes that action is underway.</p>

Sydney Review	
Recommendation	ANO assessment of Airservices' response
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>Airservices should develop a consolidated list of information sources, including the purpose and/or objective of each document, as well as a brief summary of content.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>Airservices should improve the clarity of maps produced in reports used to convey aircraft noise information.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 3:</b></p> <p>Airservices should provide more textual and qualitative assessment of aircraft noise in reporting.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 4:</b></p> <p>Airservices should provide more information, clearly presented, on daily or seasonal variations, where significant.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 5:</b></p> <p>Airservices should provide at least one Sydney specific fact sheet explaining Airservices' roles in noise sharing, LTOP, runway selections and noise respite and when appropriate, refer enquirers to other existing noise information sources.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 6:</b></p> <p>Airservices should produce a short report on LTOP performance, and the efforts currently being made to ensure the best possible noise sharing results are delivered.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 7:</b></p> <p>Airservices should explore the provision of a more timely (as well as historical) method for complainants to understand why a particular Runway Mode was in use, or why a preferred Runway Mode (noise sharing) was not able to be used at that time.</p>	The ANO notes that action is underway.
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 8:</b></p> <p>Airservices should provide links to applicable sources of information on sound insulation for homes, especially information addressing cost effective means of reducing the intrusion of aircraft noise.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>
<p><b>Sydney Issues Recommendation 9:</b></p> <p>Airservices should publish a link directing complainants to the Departmental website containing reports on curfew dispensations.</p>	<b>Actioned by Airservices</b>

## Attachment 2 ANO Complaint Statistics

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The following summarises the ANO complaint statistics for 2011-12.

Complaints carried forward from 2010-11	11
Complaints received 2011-12	109
<b>Total complaints 2011-12</b>	<b>120</b>

<b>Complaints closed during 2011-12</b>	<b>88</b>
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<b><u>Closed complaints - reviewed</u></b>	
No change possible - explanation provided	58
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	2
Change adopted by Airport operator	5
Change adopted by operator	1
<b>Total complaints reviewed</b>	<b>66</b>

*Note an additional 12 complaints were reviewed in 2011-12 but not yet closed (due to three week 'opportunity for clarification' period)*

<b><u>Closed complaints - not reviewed</u></b>	
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	10
Complainant did not provide further information	5
Outside Charter scope	7
<b>Total Complaints not reviewed</b>	<b>22</b>

<b>Complaints carried forward to 2012-13</b>	<b>32</b>
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