



Annual Report

2015-2016

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ANO role

The ANO provides independent administrative reviews of Airservices Australia's and the Department of Defence's management of aircraft noise issues, specifically focussed on three areas:

- Complaint handling
- Consultation
- Information provision

In addition, the ANO may undertake targeted reviews on systemic issues.

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1 From the Ombudsman

1.1 With the release of two significant reviews and a marked increase in the number of complaints received, 2015-16 has been a busy and productive year.

1.2 ANO achievements this year have included:

- ❖ Efficiently handling a significant increase in the number of complaints received by the office.
- ❖ Finalising our first major review for Defence: *Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley (August 2015)*.
- ❖ Finalising a major review in response to complaints received about Airservices' noise improvement initiatives in Perth: *Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals (November 2015)*.
- ❖ Seeing six potential noise improvements investigated as a response to complaints handled by the ANO office, one of which has led to a change and two others remain under investigation.
- ❖ As Chair of the Standards Australia technical committee for Aircraft and Helicopter Noise (EV-011), leading the development and publication of the handbook about aircraft noise information provision. The handbook will assist the Australian aviation sector to more clearly explain noise impacts, which may in turn reduce the levels of annoyance from aircraft noise.
- ❖ Presenting at several national and international forums on emerging trends and insights into improving aircraft noise management through a focus on reducing annoyance and better use of complaints.

“Six noise improvement opportunities were identified from investigations into complaints to the ANO office”



Ron Brent presenting at 11th ACI Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly, Conference & Exhibition April 2016

- 1.3 Through the 2015-16 period, as well as responding to the recommendations of the Perth review, Airservices has been reforming its complaints management database and enhancing its public information about aircraft noise. The ANO has been particularly impressed with the responsiveness of Airservices' Noise Complaints and Information Service to emerging issues through developing issues-based information sheets and maintaining the Noise News component of its website. The new online reporting capability which is still in development also looks promising. Airservices has also continued to improve its community engagement around change, and published an updated Communication and Consultation Protocol on 4 July 2016.

“Airservices’ response to emerging issues has impressed the ANO”

“Defence has responded to Super Hornet Review recommendations”

- 1.4 Defence has responded to the recommendations of our first review and we have noted an increase in awareness and accountability for aircraft noise issues at the Bases we have visited over the year.

Complaints received about Defence's aircraft noise management highlighted the need for a more systemic review. On 4 July 2016, the ANO office published the Terms of Reference for a *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System*. This will be finalised by end October 2016.

- 1.5 The ANO office aims to work in a collaborative way with aircraft noise stakeholders to understand issues and seek opportunities for improving noise outcomes. During the past year, ANO staff have delivered regular presentations to industry conferences and community consultation forums. In addition to our regular formal and informal interactions with Airservices and Defence staff, we have met with airport operators, community and resident group representatives, local, state and federal level politicians and their staff, departmental staff, and aviation technology providers. The ANO has also provided complaint management training to Defence, Airservices and other aviation industry staff on request.

- 1.6 I must again acknowledge the ongoing highly professional and effective contribution of the small ANO team. As just four part-timers with a national brief, we managed a significant increase in complaints while maintaining good response times, continued engagement with community and industry stakeholders across the country, and production of two major reviews. This reflects a genuine commitment to excellence and I commend the team on their significant accomplishments again this year. In line with this, I was pleased to recognise Tim Abberton's role with a change in title to Deputy Aircraft Noise Ombudsman. Tim has been an outstanding representative of this office for over five years and has represented me at a number of forums throughout Australia.

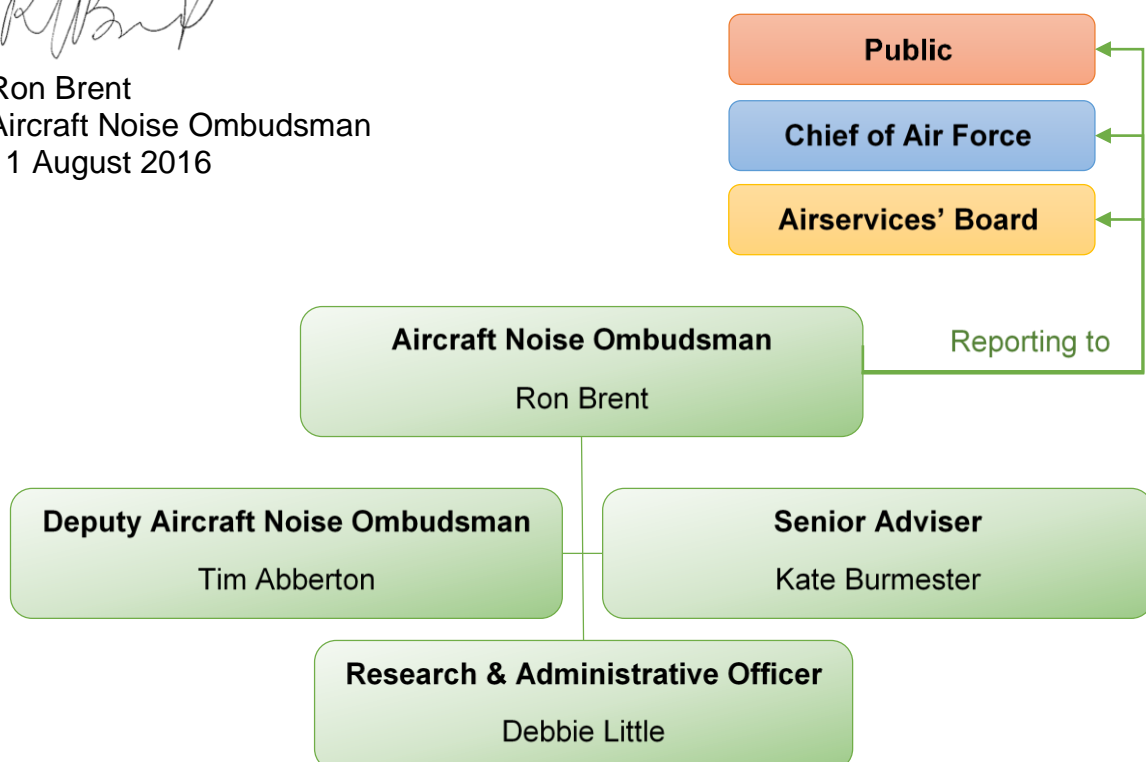


Tim Abberton, Deputy Aircraft Noise Ombudsman

- 1.7 Over the past year, we have worked proactively and reactively with both Airservices and Defence to support improved complaint-handling, information provision and community consultation on aircraft noise issues. This is not always easy and I thank the staff of Airservices and Defence with whom we work day-to-day and the leadership teams that support them. There have been staff changes in both organisations, but there remains a commitment in Defence and Airservices to maintaining effective working relationships with the ANO. I look forward to the continuation of our work with Defence and Airservices in seeking better aircraft noise outcomes.
- 1.8 Finally, we are always grateful to residents for raising concerns and making suggestions to improve aircraft noise outcomes. I continue to be inspired by the community members who make significant efforts to engage on the aircraft noise issues that concern them. Almost invariably people are seeking to understand the aircraft noise situation in their area and whether there is scope for reducing the impacts, not only for themselves, but for the broader community.
- 1.9 Frequently we see that aircraft noise complaints are not simply about the noise levels, but concern a range of other factors that drive annoyance. Through both complaints and community participation at airport community forums, we are building a better understanding of what causes annoyance to help shape options to improve aircraft noise management. This is an exciting progression in the aircraft noise management space and one that we look forward to pursuing further in the coming year.



Ron Brent
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
11 August 2016

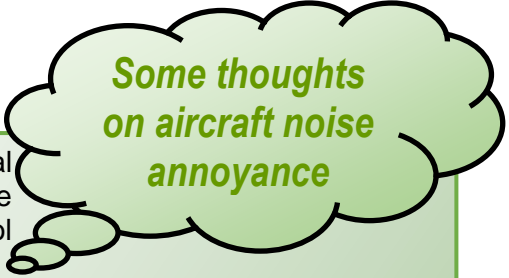


5 YEARS ON...

In September 2010 the ANO office opened its doors to complaints about Airservices Australia's handling of aircraft noise issues. This included complaint handling, community consultation and information provision. In January 2015, the ANO Charter was extended to encompass Defence's management of aircraft noise issues. In over five years, a lot has been achieved.

- **complaint handling reforms** Airservices has made significant transformation in the way that it handles complaints, no longer designating each contact a complaint and focusing on issues rather than individual events. Defence is starting on this path.
- **cultural shifts** Airservices is now identifying and actively pursuing opportunities to improve noise outcomes. Defence has integrated aircraft noise management into its combat support work, with each Base in the process of establishing a Noise Management Strategy.
- **information responsiveness** Airservices is actively developing fact sheets and information packs to respond to emerging issues arising from complaints. Defence is harnessing social media and web-based technologies to get messages out about its activities and the potential for aircraft noise impacts.
- **philosophical shifts** Internationally there is recognition that aircraft noise management is about managing annoyance more than simply trying to reduce the noise (see thought piece on following page). Further, we note the shift in industry information towards recognising that aircraft noise causes annoyance and that this will affect some people, rather than down-playing or under-stating the potential for noise impacts.
- **internal efficiencies** Within the ANO, as well as in Defence and Airservices, we have seen notable system and process improvements implemented, enhancing the quality and efficiency of complaints and noise management services.
- **fairness** Talking about subjective terms such as fairness and annoyance used to be a no-go zone in the industry's engagement with communities about aircraft noise. Instead there was a heavy focus on presenting technical noise data. We are now seeing a more effective nuanced discussion about the issues and impacts of aircraft noise.

It's not all about the noise!



*Some thoughts
on aircraft noise
annoyance*

Around the world the aviation industry has made a very substantial effort to reduce aircraft noise. Manufacturers continue to devise new ways to make aircraft quieter. Airports and air traffic control providers seek to manage aircraft in and out of airports to put less noise over fewer people. Aircraft operators work with air traffic control providers and safety regulators to find quieter ways of flying aircraft safely.

The aviation industry has responded to community concerns about aircraft noise by reducing the noise it makes. So why are complaints about aircraft noise higher than ever? From the ANO's perspective, we would suggest a number of key factors:

Industry growth: Unfortunately much of what has been gained by reducing the noise output of aircraft and introducing noise abatement procedures at airports has been offset by rapid growth in the aviation industry. For many this is because there are more flights (even if they are quieter than similar flights 20 years ago), there are more flights during noise-sensitive times (night and early morning), and larger (generally noisier) aircraft that carry more passengers operating. For many the overall experience is that aircraft noise has become worse.

More residents experience aircraft noise: Residential encroachment around airports has definitely played a role in increased community concerns about aircraft noise. Despite any reductions in noise levels, when more houses are built under flight paths and close to airports, there is an increased number of residents who may be negatively affected by aircraft noise. There is a demand for such housing so the ANO does not suggest a restriction on development. However to date such developments have not always been accompanied by clear and comprehensible information about the aircraft noise impacts and potential changes over time. This has meant residents have not always had the opportunity to consider aircraft noise impacts when deciding if the location is suited to their lifestyle choices.

Non-noise annoyance drivers: Our experience suggests that what most annoys people about the aircraft noise is not the noise itself but the feeling that they are being subjected to aircraft noise unfairly. This could be that the noise impacts are different to what they expected, their area seems to be getting more flights than other areas, they weren't aware that it could change over time, or they can see no compelling reason for the flights to operate where or when they do. Where aircraft noise impacts have been down-played, people have moved into areas affected by aircraft noise unaware that it will be noisy. It is perhaps unsurprising that the impact of noise is fundamentally determined by a person's attitude to that noise. While some people will pay hundreds of dollars to get front row seats at a music concert, households nearby the concert venue can be lodging complaints about the self-same 'noise'.

The conclusion from this for the better management of aircraft noise is that the aviation industry must certainly continue to pursue quieter ways of operating, where practical. At the same time it must also respond to the other drivers of annoyance. While many individual characteristics affect the response to aircraft noise, our experience shows that the aviation industry can control or change some of the other critical factors affecting how annoyed people will be about aircraft noise, including:

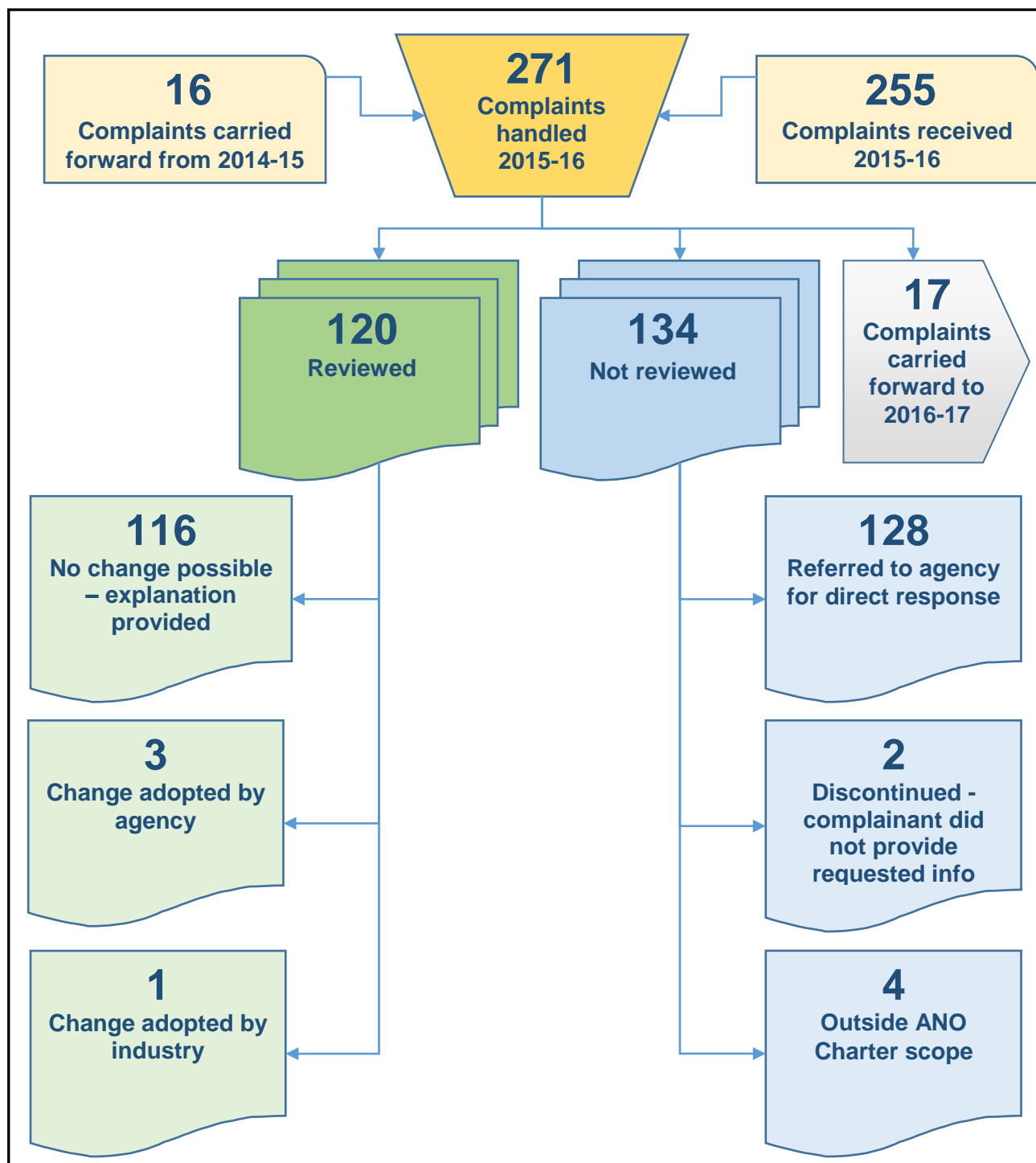
- Providing clear and comprehensible information to help residents understand why the aircraft have to fly where, when and how they do, whether there has been a change in the level of noise (particularly an unexpected or unexplained change), and whether residents understand why the aircraft can't fly elsewhere.
- Listening carefully and empathetically to complaints to identify potential opportunities to reduce noise and improve information about why changes can't be made.
- Engaging with land-use planners and the real estate industry to improve the compatibility of residential developments near airports and under flight paths, and in particular to ensure that potential aircraft noise impacts are not down-played.

There is no 'silver bullet' solution to the challenges of aircraft noise management, but by addressing the drivers of annoyance, not just the noise itself, the aviation industry can do significantly better than it has done in the past.

2 Complaints

Complaint statistics

2.1 The ANO received more complaints in 2015-16 than in any of the previous years. The following graphic shows how we handled them.



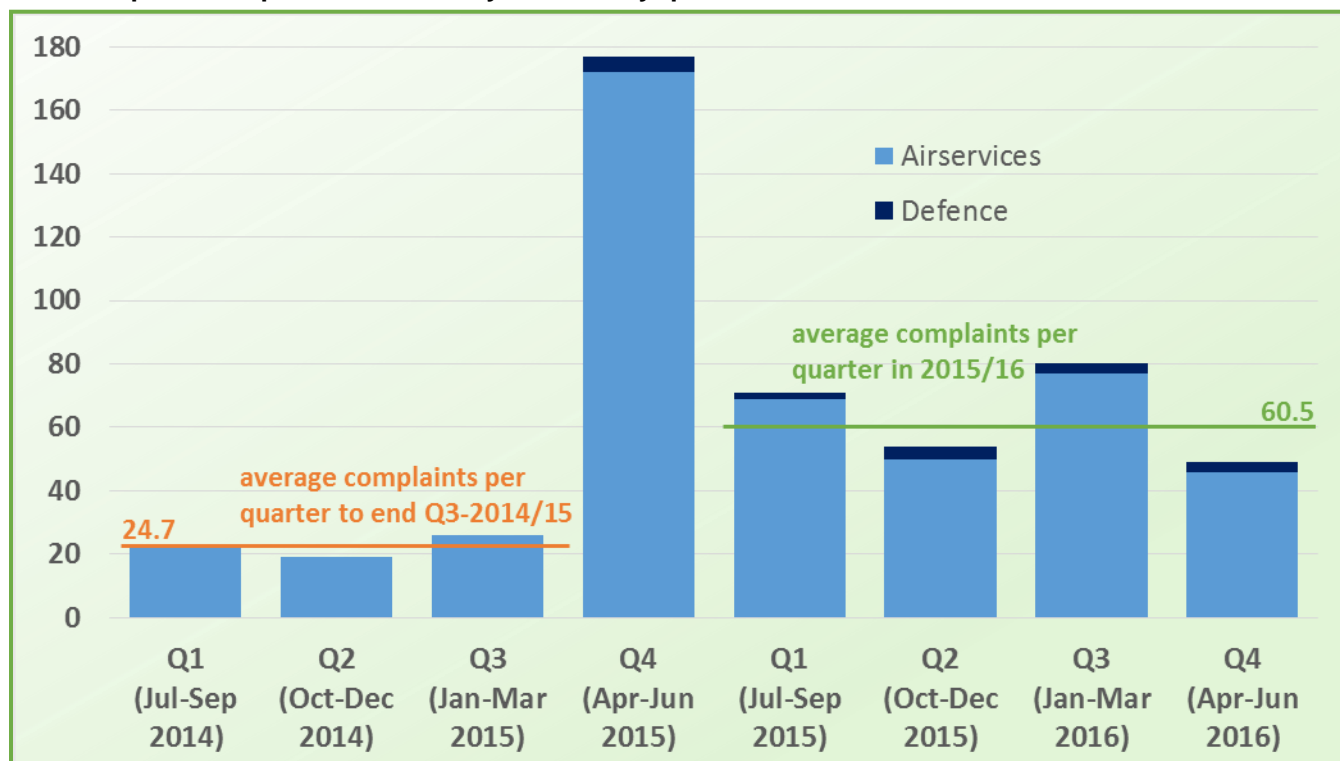
- 2.2 The table below shows the changes in the annual and per month average for ANO complaints received over time.

Table 1: Comparative complaints received by financial year

	Total fin. year	Ave per month	% Change
Sep 2010-Jun 2011 (10 mths)	101	10.1	
Jul 2011-Jun 2012 (12 mths)	109	9.1	↓ 10.1%
Jul 2012-Jun 2013 (12 mths)	88	7.3	↓ 19.3%
Jul 2013-Jun 2014 (12 mths)	106	8.8	↑ 20.5%
Jul 2014-Jun 2015 (12 mths)	239	19.9	↑ 125.4%
Jul 2015-Jun 2016 (12 mths)	255	21.3	↑ 6.7%

- 2.3 The significant increase experienced in the last quarter of the 2014-15 financial year was not sustained into the 2015-16 financial year, although complaint numbers remained substantially higher across the financial year compared with the previous the long-term average (up to the end of quarter 3 – 2014/15).

Graph 1: Complaints received by the ANO by quarter in 2014-15 and 2015-16



- 2.4 The ANO started the financial year with 16 open complaints and received a further 255 complaints during the period. Of the total 271 complaints handled in 2015-16, we closed 254. Of these, we reviewed 121 complaints in detail, referred 128 back to either Airservices or Defence to respond to directly, and closed six more without review due to a lack of information from the complainant or the complaint being outside the scope of the ANO Charter.
- 2.5 The number of complaints reviewed was significantly higher this year than in any previous year, although in percentage terms this has been quite variable over time as shown by the table below.

Table 2: Complaints reviewed versus total complaints handled

	Complaints handled	Complaints reviewed #	Complaints reviewed %
2011-12	120	88	73%
2012-13	120	82	68%
2013-14	128	75	59%
2014-15	253	58	23%
2015-16	271	120	44%

- 2.6 Of the complaints reviewed in 2015-16, most were not able to lead to any change (see table below). In such cases, the ANO, having investigated the issues, provides a detailed explanation to the complainant.

Table 3: Outcome of complaints reviewed by the ANO in 2015-16

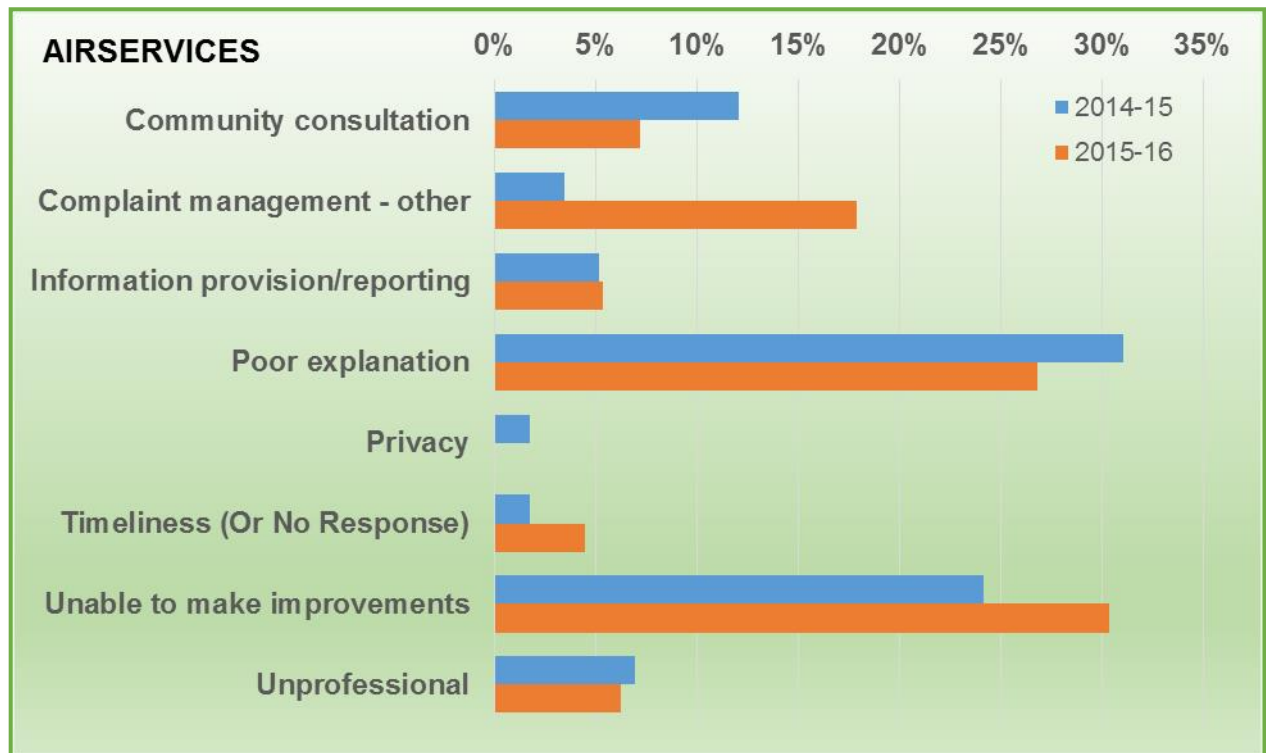
Complaints reviewed and closed:	120	
No change possible - explanation provided	116	96.7%
Change adopted by Airservices or Defence	3	2.5%
Change adopted by airport operator	0	0.0%
Change adopted by operator	1	0.8%

- 2.7 The statistics above relate to those complaints raised with the ANO. Although only three complaints raised with the ANO led directly to Airservices or Defence adopting a change (all three of which were procedural changes by the complaints handling team), both agencies have actively pursued noise improvements. Two further changes were adopted by the industry more broadly, in response to complaints to the ANO and facilitated by Airservices and the ANO.
- 2.8 **Attachment 1** provides a summary of ANO complaint statistics for 2015-16.

Issues analysis

- 2.9 Issues were recorded only for those complaints that were reviewed by the ANO and reflect what the complainant reported as the main issue(s) in dealing with either Defence or Airservices. The aim in collecting this data is to allow the ANO to better identify systemic issues.
- 2.10 For Airservices, the following graph shows the reported issues arising from complaints about Airservices that were reviewed by the ANO and closed in the 2015-16 financial year compared with the 2014-15 financial year. Given the significant difference in the number of reviewed cases in 2015-16 compared to 2014-15, the number of issues is shown as a percentage of the reviewed cases for each year.

Graph 2: Reported issues for ANO complaints about Airservices: 2014-15 and 2015-16

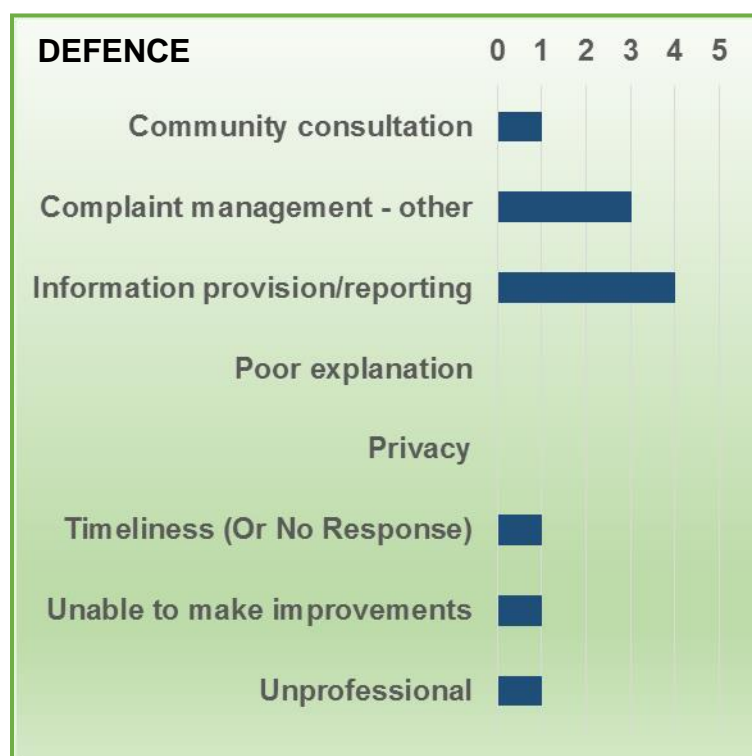


- 2.11 The above graph shows that in the past financial year, as in 2014-15, the two main issues for complainants who escalate their concerns about Airservices to the ANO were about receiving poor explanations or Airservices not being able to make improvements.
- 2.12 Interestingly, there was a significant increase (in percentage terms) in the number of cases recorded in the past year against the issue “complaint management – other”. Analysis of the data revealed that this issue largely reflected concerns about the validation study Airservices held in Perth earlier this year. Seventeen of the 20 complaints raising the “complaint management – other” issue were from Perth and 14 of these were about the trial. There were two types of concern about the trial captured:

- Firstly, complainants from areas that would be negatively affected by the trial raised concerns that Airservices was proceeding simply because of a complaint campaign by residents who would benefit from the trial. Negatively affected residents considered this his was an inappropriate way to respond to complaints, given Airservices' own modelling didn't support that the change would represent an overall noise improvement.
- Secondly, those set to benefit from the trial were raising concerns about the short-term nature and the emphasis by Airservices on the trial being to validate the modelling that wouldn't support a permanent change. The second group contended that the trial was a cynical exercise by Airservices and a disingenuous response to complaints.

2.13 For Defence, the ANO reviewed just eight cases in total in the financial year. The dominant issues, as displayed on the graph below, were "information provision/reporting" and "Complaint management – other". This latter issue related mainly to complainants experiencing difficulty initially reaching the right person or area within Defence who could respond to their complaint or enquiry.

Graph 3: Reported issues for ANO complaints about Defence: 2015-16



3 Noise improvement opportunities

- 3.1 Investigations into noise improvement opportunities that stem from complaints handled by the ANO or from ANO attendance at community consultation meetings are tracked in our quarterly reports. These reports are available on our website and **Attachment 2** summarises the noise improvement opportunities considered in 2015-16.
- 3.2 Five of the six potential noise improvements considered in the past year as a response to complaints handled by the ANO office were matters referred to Airservices for further investigation and analysis. One has led to a change and two others remain under investigation. Three were thoroughly investigated and after independent consideration, the ANO accepted Airservices' decision not to progress the proposals further for varying reasons. In two instances, although a very minor noise improvement might be technically feasible, the smallness of the potential benefit was not sufficient to justify the effort that would be required to make the change, which would also have some small potential negative impacts. The case study below demonstrates this difficult evaluation.

CASE STUDY 1 Is it worth it?

In November 2015, a resident affected by arrivals to runway 06 at Perth Airport contacted the ANO asking why planes arriving from the north fly to the east and south of the airport to arrive on the south-westerly aligned runway, over-flying many Perth residents. Why couldn't the planes come in from over the ocean?

Even though the runway is least preferred for arrivals and therefore has a very low number of days when it is used for arrivals, the ANO asked Airservices to look into whether alternative approaches to runway 06 in Perth would reduce the numbers of residents overflown. After analysis, Airservices concluded that, although a potentially feasible approach route could be identified, the anticipated benefits did not justify the time and cost of the work involved to progress the proposal. This included the following considerations:

- The timeframes required to do the work with the likelihood that further re-design would be required soon after, when planning for the new runway commences
- The substantial workload involved in designing a technically compliant, safe, operationally effective and environmentally responsible approach procedure
- The workload and costs to assess changes to noise impacts for some residential areas and to develop / implement appropriate community consultation strategies
- The relatively low use of runway 06 anyway, meaning that the potential benefits to be gained are not significant.

The ANO independently reviewed in detail the analysis and information provided by Airservices. We accepted Airservices' decision not to pursue this potential noise improvement opportunity for the reasons provided.

We pressed Airservices to demonstrate that all reasonable options were explored. We met with several senior managers involved in managing the noise initiatives in Perth to ensure this process was thorough. On balance, we were satisfied with Airservices' decision.

– Tim Abberton, Deputy ANO

4 Community engagement and information provision

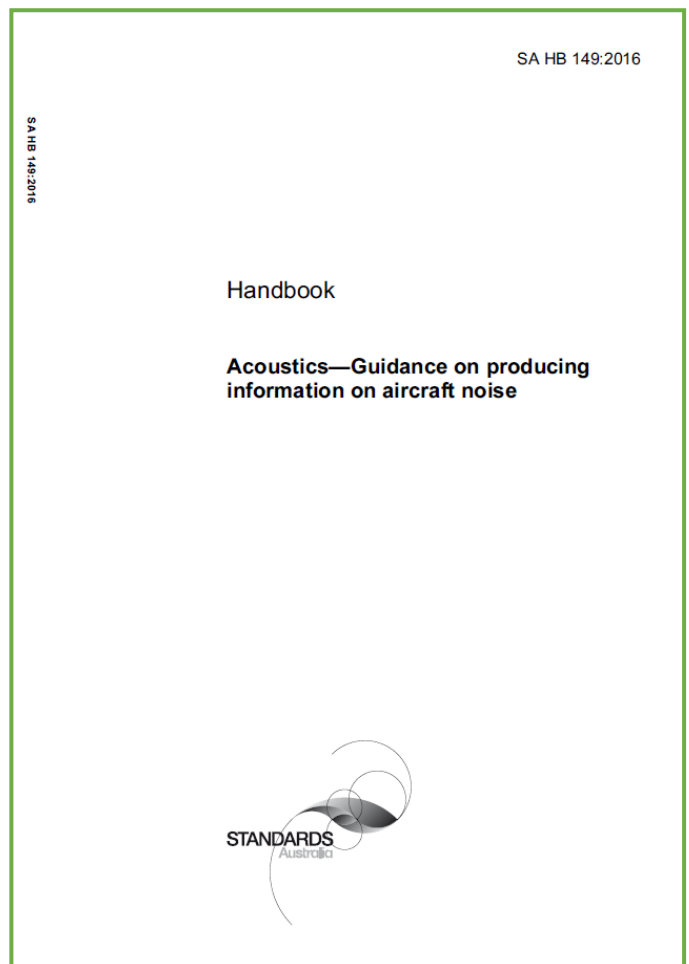
4.1 As we do each year, the ANO office has attended a variety of community and aviation industry meetings across Australia during the past twelve months. By going to these meetings we gain a first-hand perspective of community and industry issues. We use the opportunity to monitor Airservices' and Defence's information presentation and consultation activities, and to identify emerging aircraft noise issues. It also helps to increase public awareness of the ANO role, our recent activities, and the opportunities we are pursuing to improve noise outcomes.

“By attending community and aviation industry meetings, the ANO can gain a first-hand perspective of emerging aircraft noise issues”

4.2 This year ANO staff attended 15 Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group (or equivalent) meetings. Additionally, we attended various industry meetings, including the major annual conferences of the Australian Airports Association (AAA), the Australian Mayoral Aviation Council (AMAC), and the Aviation Industry Noise Forum.

4.3 The ANO was also invited to present at several international forums, including the Air Transport Action Group (ATAG)'s Global Sustainable Aviation Summit, the Airports Council International (ACI) World Environment Standing Committee meeting, the Aircraft Noise Non-Acoustical (ANNA) group meeting and the 11th ACI Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly Conference.

4.4 As mentioned in last year's report, the ANO also chaired the committee that developed the Standards Australia handbook about aircraft noise information provision, which was published in June 2016 (SA HB 149:2016). The handbook “provides guidance on how information about aircraft noise and its impacts on areas in the vicinity of airports can be presented in a clearer, less technical and more informative manner for the general public... [It] is intended for use by airport owners and operators, government agencies, and other organisations, when producing and promulgating information on the distribution of aircraft noise around an airport.”



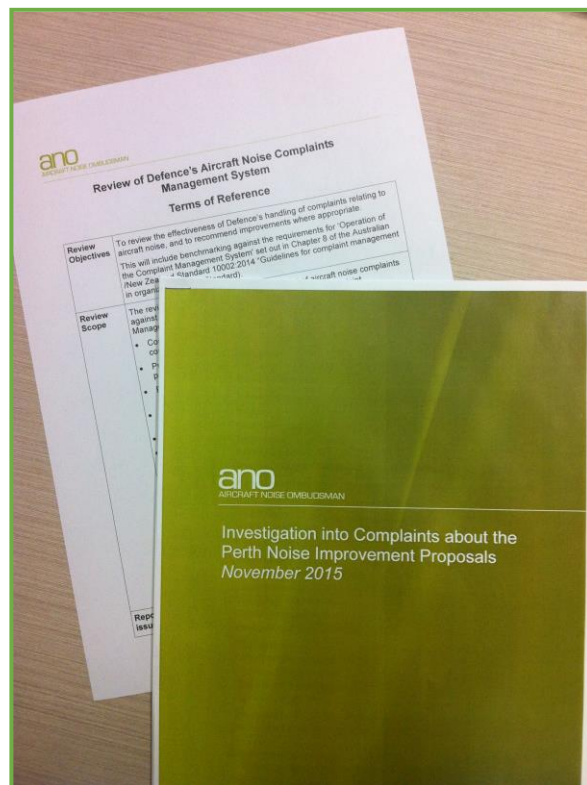
5 ANO reviews

Airservices

- 5.1 As foreshadowed in last year's annual report, the ANO responded to community reactions about Airservices' efforts to introduce noise improvement changes in Perth by releasing a review: Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals (November 2015).
- 5.2 It is fair to say that the review was quite critical of some aspects of Airservices' management of the change proposals. These included development of the proposals, presentation to the public and the analysis of the possible benefits and impacts. However, the ANO commends Airservices on seeking and pursuing aircraft noise improvements in Perth. The report was in no way critical of Airservices making or continuing to pursue such efforts to improve noise outcomes.
- 5.3 By adopting the recommendations the ANO expects that Airservices will better manage future noise improvement changes. Already nineteen of the twenty-five recommendations are complete and work is underway on each of the remaining six. **Attachment 3** summarises the ANO assessment of progress on each recommendation.

Defence

- 5.4 The ANO's first review for Defence was an audit of Defence's compliance with the Conditions of Approval for Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations, RAAF Base, Amberley, QLD (EPBC 2008/4410), as varied by Ministerial approval in April 2014 (Conditions of Approval). This led to publication of our report: Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley in August 2015.
- 5.5 The report sets out the detailed review, ANO findings and makes twelve recommendations. Defence has commenced work on all recommendations and has closed seven. **Attachment 3** summarises the ANO assessment of progress on each recommendation.
- 5.6 On 4 July 2016, the ANO released the Terms of Reference for a Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System. The aim is to review the effectiveness of Defence's handling of complaints relating to aircraft noise, and to recommend improvements where appropriate. This will include benchmarking against the requirements for 'Operation of the Complaint Management System' set out in Chapter 8 of the Australian /New Zealand Standard 10002:2014 "Guidelines for complaint management in organizations". The review is already well underway and is due to be finalised in October 2016.



6 ANO publications

6.1 In addition to our quarterly reports and last year's annual report, the ANO published the following on our website during 2015-16:

- 7 August 2015 - ANO Statement - Perth Noise Initiatives
- 24 November 2015 - Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley
- 21 January 2016 - Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals, including Airservices Australia's response
- 25 February 2016 - ANO view on the flight path validation study
- 29 April 2016 - Tim Abberton assigned title as Deputy Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
- 4 July 2016 - Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System – Terms of Reference

6.2 Further, an article about an ANO industry paper "Overly persistent complaining: unreasonable conduct or rational response?" was published in *Consumer Directions* (March 2016), the official members publication of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals Australia.

UNREASONABLE CONDUCT OR RATIONAL RESPONSE

Persistent complainants, or just wanting to be heard

Are the actions of complaint handlers part of the problem in creating persistent complainants?



The Aircraft Noise Ombudsman considers the issue in this industry paper on the differences between unreasonable conduct and rational response.

When faced with a case from a complainant who contacted an agency approximately 20,000 times in a year about a noise complaint, and more than 80 times about a single flight, Aircraft Noise Ombudsman Ron Brent knew it was time to review the cause and effect of persistent complaints.

"One of the five categories of unreasonable complainant behaviour experienced by complaint agencies is 'unreasonable persistence', as defined in the 'Better Practice Guide to Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct'." Mr Brent says.

"One of the factors contributing to unreasonable persistence identified in the guide is getting gratification from the process of regular contact," he said.

"However, before assuming overly persistent conduct of the complainant is unreasonable, agencies should consider whether the complaint service is accepting, supporting or even encouraging this behaviour - that is, offering some form of gratification to the complainant that makes the persistent behaviour rational, and indeed 'reasonable' in the circumstances.

"Having investigated the 20,000 contacts case, and other high volume examples, the ANO considers that the behaviour of the complainant may not have been sensible, and was certainly not desirable, but it was not necessarily 'unreasonable'. The complainant was seeking an outcome that the system supported. The cause of the behaviour, and the way to end it, lay in the hands of the complaint agency," Mr Brent said.

"This recognition has led the ANO to further consider the agency's complaint handling processes and system, and the development of an industry discussion paper on the differences between unreasonable conduct and rational response in relation to persistent complainants. An edited version is shared with Consumer Directions.

OVERLY PERSISTENT COMPLAINING: UNREASONABLE CONDUCT OR RATIONAL RESPONSE?

By Kate Burmester*, with Ron Brent† and Tim Abberton†

BACKGROUND

When complaint handlers gather, the most likely topic to start the conversation is not the great victories they have achieved, or the clever new way they have found to explain a decision. It is more likely to be the number of times their most persistent complainant has contacted them, or the number of simultaneous complaints a single person has managed to run on the one issue.

The discussion is usually premised on the assumption that the complainant is being unreasonable.

WHAT CAUSES UNDUE PERSISTENCE?

Some overly persistent complainants will fit the stereotype of people with personality disorders or mental health issues. In addition they may be angry, frustrated, rude, abusive and sometimes potentially violent.

Even in cases with no apparent rational reason for overly persistent behaviour, there are actions that can help to bring the matter to a close. Often complainants engaging in unreasonable conduct will nonetheless exercise a level of reasonable decision making when confronted with clear choices and clear outcomes.

In contrast, there are cases where excessive persistence is actually reasonable. We would argue that this is the case for the complainant who contacted the agency, using the online complaint system, in the order of 20,000 times in a single year about an aircraft noise complaint, and over 80 times about a single flight. At the time of this engagement, the relevant agency designated each contact from a complainant as a separate 'complaint' with a separate identifying number. The agency explained to the complainant that it could not fix the problem of the aircraft noise but that it would report 'complaints' to various other parties such as the government and the airport. Indeed, it published a map with suburbs coded different colours to reflect those with the most 'complaints' each month. This map was based on the number of contacts from a suburb rather than the number of separate issues and/or the numbers of complainants.

Every month the agency reported that the complainant's suburb had one of the highest number of noise 'complaints', with vastly more 'complaints' than most other parts of the city. The complainant believed he was able to keep his problem at the forefront of the aircraft noise issues in his city. In this sense, his persistence may indeed be a very rational and reasonable approach. The problem was not with the complainant's behaviour,

Do the systems and processes employed by the complaint handling agency encourage persistent complaints?

or even with the complaint handler's response, but rather with how the complaint agency reported on data from their own system.

When the agency changed its reporting so that number of complainants rather than contacts were reported, the number of repeated contacts from any given individual dropped significantly. Persistent complainants subsequently sought advice on how regularly they would need to contact the organisation to ensure that they were counted in the reported statistics. If statistics are published quarterly these complainants wanted to ensure that every quarterly report included their complaint. Again, demonstrating a very reasonable response to the reporting change.

BEYOND GOOD COMPLAINT HANDLING

A complaint handler's focus must be on the complaint issues. For the individual with aircraft noise trouble the complaint handler investigated whether there were any options to reduce the noise or assist in the cost of noise insulation, but the answer to both those questions was 'no'. It is then the role of the complaint handler to provide these answers honestly and clearly.

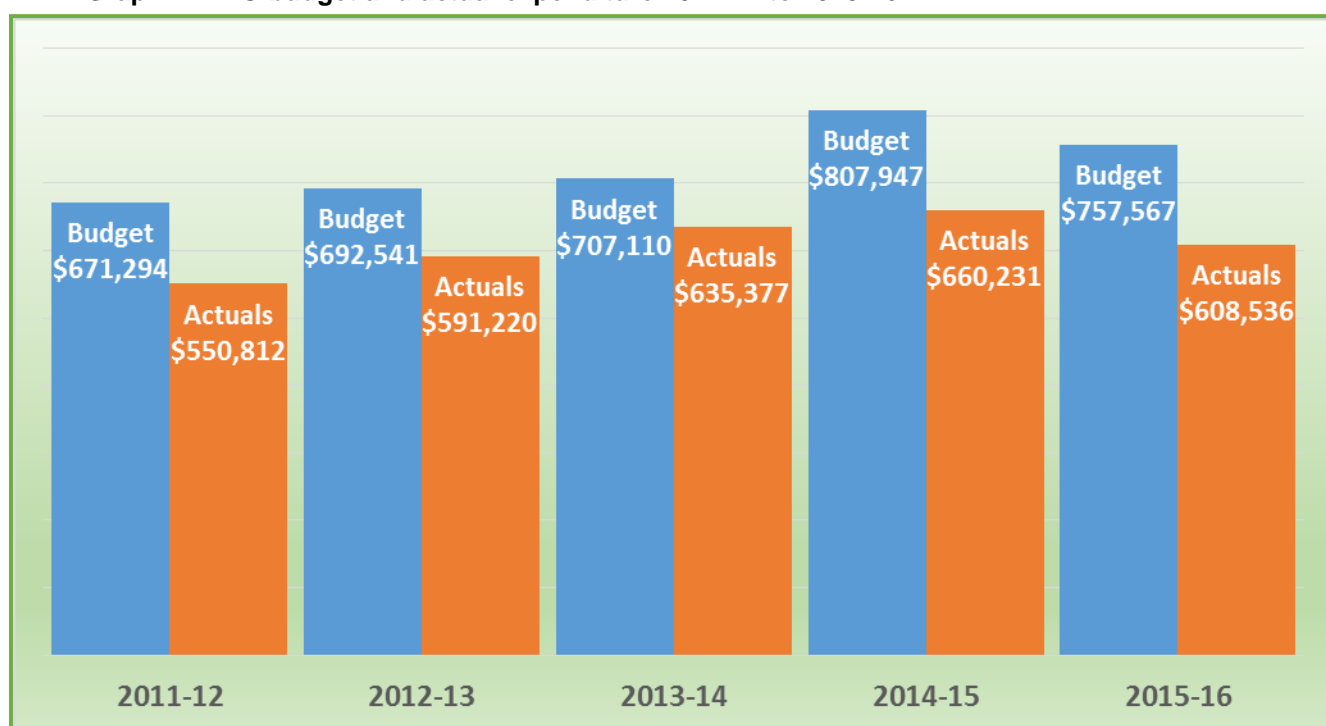
8 ■ March 2016 ■ Consumer Directions

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7 Financial Results

- 7.1 The ANO operates autonomously in managing its financial accountabilities. In line with the ANO Charter, the ANO independently determines how funds and resources are allocated, within the budget provided by Airservices and Defence.
- 7.2 As with previous years, the ANO has managed its budget effectively, with actual costs again well within the annual budget. In 2015-16, the total operating expenditure of the office was \$608,536 against a budget of \$757,567.
- 7.3 Costs include all staff salaries and entitlements, travel, and administrative overhead costs. The decrease in costs from last year reflects savings made largely in staff costs from reducing the administrative staffing level. We also under-spent compared to budget on minor purchases, incidentals and training.

Graph 4: ANO budget and actual expenditure 2011-12 to 2015-16



Attachment 1 ANO Complaint Statistics

The following summarises the ANO complaint statistics for 2015-16.

	Total	Airservices	Defence
Complaints carried forward from 2014-15	16	13	3
Complaints received 2015-16	255	243	12
Total complaints handled in 2015-16	271	256	15

<u>Closed complaints - reviewed</u>			
No change possible - explanation provided	116	108	8
Change adopted by Airservices or Defence	3	3	0
Change adopted by airport operator	0	0	0
Change adopted by operator	1	1	0
Total complaints reviewed and closed	120	112	8

<u>Closed complaints - not reviewed</u>			
Referred to agency to respond to directly	128	123	5
Complainant did not provide further information	2	2	0
Outside Charter scope	4	4	0
Total complaints not reviewed and closed	134	129	5

Complaints closed during 2015-16	254	241	13
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Complaints carried forward to 2016-17	17	15	2
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Attachment 2 Noise improvement opportunities

One of the core focuses of our investigations into complaints is to look for the potential to improve noise outcomes. The following table summarises the noise improvement opportunities stemming from complaints received by the ANO or part of ongoing ANO monitoring during the 2015-16 financial year.

Noise improvement opportunities considered during 2015-16

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Apr 2012	Brisbane – Can some northbound and westbound departures from runway 19 depart on additional tracks to reduce the concentration of noise over current areas?	Airservices examined the option of a noise sharing approach, where a single departure track is replaced with multiple tracks to enhance noise sharing. Airservices identified that such an arrangement has not been trialled previously in Australia; however Airservices intends to consider this approach in the future. Airservices subsequently advised that trials of this approach are not likely to be held in Brisbane initially due to the operational constraints of the airport. Airservices had previously advised that it would use the proposed night time respite path in Perth to test the validity of a multi-track model. As the trial is now not proceeding, Airservices has advised that further consideration of a multi-track model is unlikely to be trialled anywhere in Australia for some time.
May 2014	Gold Coast: flights over NSW residences during daylight saving hours	The ANO asked Airservices to consider if a better noise outcome can be achieved for NSW residents affected by re-directing southerly departures from Gold Coast Airport in the hour prior to 11pm QLD time (that is, prior to the curfew commencing, but 11pm-midnight in NSW time), when the two states are on different zones. Airservices added this opportunity to its Strategic Noise Improvement Plan and identified that the change “adds some complexity but is feasible”. Airservices has given this opportunity further consideration and does not propose to proceed with a change. The ANO has independently reviewed the information and data provided and accepts that, on balance, at this time, Airservices’ decision is reasonable. The analysis does not support further development of this proposal given the very low number of aircraft involved and the resources required to progress the change.
Aug 2014	Camden: removing practice engine failures from residential areas	The ANO asked Airservices to look into whether procedures for ‘practice engine failures’, similar to those employed at Jandakot Airport, could be applied at Camden Airport to avoid this practice over residential areas. Airservices consulted with relevant stakeholders and the airport has now updated their ‘fly friendly’ arrangements accordingly. The new arrangements were endorsed at the July 2015 Community Aviation Consultation Group meeting. The updated fly friendly procedures were published on the Airport website on 29 September 2015.
Nov 2015	Perth: approach to runway 06 over fewer residents	The ANO asked Airservices to look into whether alternative approaches to runway 06 in Perth would reduce the numbers of residents overflown. After analysis, Airservices concluded that, although a potentially feasible approach route could be identified, the potential benefits did not justify the time and cost of the work involved to do the necessary detailed assessments of the proposal at this time. The ANO was satisfied that Airservices had explored reasonable options and, on balance, accepted Airservices’ decision not to pursue this potential noise improvement opportunity for the reasons provided.

Table continues on next page

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
Mar 2016	Sydney: adjustment to flight paths over water during curfew hours	The ANO has asked Airservices to consider if a better noise outcome can be achieved for coastal residents south of Sydney Airport affected by flights departing during the curfew. Airservices added this opportunity to its Strategic Noise Improvement Plan and have commenced preliminary investigations into the feasibility of a change.
Apr 2016	Adelaide: options to reduce the impacts of helicopter operations, especially during curfew hours	The ANO received a complaint about helicopter activities over residential areas late at night. The ANO is seeking more information about the nature of helicopter operations at Adelaide Airport to determine if any opportunities are available to reduce the noise impacts while meeting operational needs.

Attachment 3 ANO assessment of action on recommendations

During the 2015-16 financial year the ANO finalised two major reviews. The following tables summarise the status of each recommendation, as at the end of June 2016.

Review of Australian Super Hornet Flying Operations at RAAF Base Amberley (August 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 1 – Defence should adopt appropriate record management practices to ensure identified gaps in record-keeping are addressed.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised it has addressed this recommendation. ANO is seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 2 – Defence should work with the NFPMS supplier to improve the accuracy and reliability of the data captured by the NFPMS and presented in reports.	<u>Complete</u> – The ANO is satisfied that Defence has worked with the NFPMS supplier to improve the accuracy and reliability of the data captured and reported.
Recommendation 3 – Defence should ensure that requirements in Standing Instructions and similar documents are aligned with the Super Hornet Conditions of Approval and associated plans and strategies.	<u>Complete</u> – The ANO has reviewed the updated Noise Management Plan and the amended Standing Instructions to confirm alignment.
Recommendation 4 – Defence should as soon as possible <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. conduct a review of the state of implementation against the recommendations of the Vipac report completed in 2011. 2. report the findings of this review to the Commonwealth Environment Department in accordance with the Conditions of Approval. 	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that this is complete. ANO is seeking evidence to support Defence advice.
Recommendation 5 – Defence should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. update the Noise Management Plan and delete the requirement for a copy to be provided to the Ipswich Library, or provide a copy to the library 2. update the Noise Management Plan to correct the telephone number for obtaining a copy of the Plan. 	<u>Complete</u> – The ANO has reviewed the updated version of the Noise Management Plan and confirmed this recommendation is completed.
Recommendation 6 – Defence should review the reporting requirements in the Noise Management Plan and establish systems to ensure adherence to the requirements.	<u>Ongoing</u> – The ANO has reviewed Defence's systems and is seeking supporting data to confirm reporting requirements are adhered to.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 7 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Noise Management Plan in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.	<u>Complete</u> – Defence has amended the relevant Standing Instruction to specify accountabilities for annual reviews and implemented a system for recording reviews.
Recommendation 8 – Defence should ensure that future quarterly reports include information to support the requirements of the current version of Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected in Q3 2016.
Recommendation 9 – Defence should publish reports and meeting minutes in a reasonable timeframe.	<u>Complete</u> – Defence has updated its website with all current reports and meeting minutes and introduced a tracking system to ensure ongoing compliance.
Recommendation 10 – Defence should expedite establishment of an online complaint lodgement capability.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that work on this recommendation is ongoing with completion expected by end 2016.
Recommendation 11 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Australian Super Hornet Noise Monitoring and Complaints Handling Strategy in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.	<u>Complete</u> – Defence has amended the relevant Standing Instruction to specify accountabilities for annual reviews and implemented a system for recording reviews.
Recommendation 12 – Defence should routinely review and update (as required) the Australian Super Hornet Noise Mitigation and Complaint Resolution Strategy in line with the documented requirements. Defence should document the review process and outcomes.	<u>Complete</u> – Defence has amended the relevant Standing Instruction to specify accountabilities for annual reviews and implemented a system for recording reviews.

Investigation into Complaints about the Perth Noise Improvement Proposals (November 2015)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 1: Airservices should explain the discrepancy in its public information when compared to their detailed Environmental Assessment and, if found to be in error, correct all public information and, as far as practicable, advise all individuals who had received incorrect data of the correction.	<u>Ongoing</u> – The ANO notes that Airservices has corrected its public website information. The ANO will finalise this recommendation when the PIR is released, as we are advised it will be sent directly to individuals reflecting corrected information.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 2: Airservices should correct the public record at the next opportunity through the PACF to provide a comprehensive answer to the Guildford resident's issues, which includes an explanation of the potential for Airservices' preferred runways change to have contributed to the resident's experience of an increase in take-offs over the area.	<u>Complete</u> - The ANO has reviewed the updated response by Airservices and confirmed this recommendation is complete.
Recommendation 3: For all changes to air traffic management that will have an effect on aircraft noise impacts, Airservices should provide clear information to the public on both the justification for the change and the expected changes in aircraft noise in time for meaningful consultation and certainly prior to implementation of the change.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has amended its Communication and Consultation Protocol. The ANO has noted the early consultations on the Aircraft Navigation Modernisation Program provided clear information on the expected aircraft noise outcome and justification for the change.
Recommendation 4: Airservices should present potential aircraft noise impacts accurately and avoid under-statement.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices demonstrated improved presentation of aircraft noise impacts in the information provided as part of the validation study conducted in Feb-Apr 2016 and also in the PIR TORs.
Recommendation 5: Airservices should review and amend the currently available information about the preferred runways change to clearly present the expected noise outcomes.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has clearly presented the expected noise outcomes from the preferred runways change in its PIR TORs.
Recommendation 6: Airservices should ensure that its post-implementation review of the preferred runways change addresses whether the change actually represents an overall noise improvement for Perth, considering the impacts across all areas that have been affected by the change. If the change does not deliver an overall noise improvement for Perth, Airservices should revert to previous arrangements or propose an alternative that is expected to deliver a noise improvement.	<u>Ongoing</u> – This will be considered when the preferred runways PIR, due to be completed in Sept 2016, is finalised by Airservices.
Recommendation 7: Airservices should respond to all ANO requests with complete, accurate and timely information.	<u>Complete</u> - Airservices has reallocated its relationship management with the ANO and made a commitment to improved responsiveness to ANO requests. The ANO has noted an improvement and considers this recommendation is complete.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 8: Airservices' post-implementation review of the preferred runways change should include a discussion of the impacts of the change in all areas affected, including for the suburbs affected by departures and arrivals to each end of each runway.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices' PIR TORs outline that these requirements will be addressed in the preferred runways PIR, due to be completed in Sept 2016.
Recommendation 9: Airservices should review the feedback from the ANO about its Environmental Assessments and incorporate better analysis of aircraft noise issues and impacts in its environmental assessment processes. This should include introduction of a robust process of critical review before finalisation of assessments.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it is developing a 'Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments', due to be completed by quarter 3, 2016.
Recommendation 10: Airservices' post-implementation review should present the impacts of changes in different areas at night-time, and specifically the impact in terms of nights of respite.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices' PIR TORs outline that these requirements will be addressed in the preferred runways PIR, due to be completed in Sept 2016.
Recommendation 11: Airservices should resolve its internal communication issues to ensure correct, adequate and timely information is provided to internal decision-makers, the ANO and the public about change proposals.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has amended its Communication and Consultation Protocol and also redefined its internal processes and accountabilities for noise improvement change proposals.
Recommendation 12: Airservices' post-implementation review should provide an explanation for why the change was implemented on a permanent basis despite the Environmental Assessment conclusion, and also assess the adequacy of community consultation undertaken.	<u>Ongoing</u> – This will be considered when the preferred runways PIR, due to be completed in Sept 2016, is finalised by Airservices.
Recommendation 13: Airservices should review its decision-making processes related to the introduction of this change and report to the ANO and the Board on any changes it will introduce to ensure that future air traffic management changes are made with due consideration to relevant information.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has redefined its internal processes and accountabilities for noise improvement change proposals, aligning it with the change processes for any air traffic management change.
Recommendation 14: Airservices should target its community consultations to areas that are identified as potentially affected by the proposed change and ensure that communities receive all relevant information in a reasonable time to be able to provide feedback on changes prior to implementation.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has amended its Communication and Consultation Protocol, restating its commitment to information provision and timely, targeted community consultation.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 15: Airservices should include in its post-implementation review a detailed analysis of the actual impacts of the introduction of smart tracking and the associated change made to the visual approach route. It should consider impacts particularly at night-time, and re-visit the findings of the Environmental Assessment to determine if the change in fact did represent a potentially significant impact within the meaning of the EPBC Act.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices' PIR TORs outline that these requirements will be addressed in the smart tracking PIR, due to be completed in Dec 2016.
Recommendation 16: Airservices' material in support of a proposed change should explicitly present how the negatives are balanced by the benefits and on what basis the chosen approach is optimal compared to viable alternatives.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has amended its Communication and Consultation Protocol, to include providing balanced information on the potential impacts and benefits of a change.
Recommendation 17: In announcing proposed changes, Airservices should explicitly emphasise the degree of uncertainty and the known factors that will potentially influence the likelihood of the proposed change proceeding.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has amended its Communication and Consultation Protocol, to include providing information on the processes (including legislative processes) required to implement a change as part of the consultation information.
Recommendation 18: Airservices should consider the social, economic and cultural context of the communities it is consulting and ensure consultation strategies enable accessibility, understanding and an opportunity for genuine engagement in the issues within those communities.	<u>Complete</u> - The ANO has reviewed the recent material produced by Airservices on the short-term validation study and notes it meets the intent of this recommendation. The ANO expects that this learning will flow into all future community engagement activities and considers this recommendation is complete.
Recommendation 19: Airservices should consult openly with communities, even when making only temporary changes, and provide as much information as it can prior to implementing any such change.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has acknowledged and restated its commitment to open consultation in its amended Communication and Consultation Protocol. The ANO noted the effective consultation undertaken prior to Airservices' temporary validation study in Feb-Apr 2016.
Recommendation 20: Airservices should produce a proposal assessment for each change that provides a comprehensible outline of any change proposal, including the pros and cons, key considerations, the conclusion and the final decision Airservices has made. Relevant material that underpins the decisions should also be published for those seeking greater detail.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it is developing a 'Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments', due to be completed by quarter 3, 2016.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
Recommendation 21: Airservices should ensure its Environmental Assessments for changes in air traffic arrangements reflect a thorough and transparent analysis of all key issues relevant to aircraft noise impacts, and specifically reflecting the key issues and concerns of communities.	<u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it is developing a ‘Procedure Manual for Undertaking Environmental Assessments’, due to be completed by quarter 3, 2016.
Recommendation 22: Airservices should tailor its public announcements about aircraft noise management to address the specific concerns and expectations of affected communities, as identified in consultation forums and aircraft noise complaints.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices has acknowledged and restated its commitment to tailored public consultation strategies in its amended Communication and Consultation Protocol. The ANO noted the effective consultation undertaken prior to Airservices’ short-term validation study in Feb-Apr 2016.
Recommendation 23: As far as practical, Airservices should make direct contact with community leaders prior to public announcements about issues that affect the community to help ensure that consistent information is passed on to residents.	<u>Complete</u> – The ANO considers that Airservices acknowledges the value in prior consultation for significant changes affecting specific community groups.
Recommendation 24: Airservices should not pursue the noise-respite trial as proposed in March 2015, even as a short term trial measure, and instead should put out clear information as to the inequitable consequences that would necessarily flow in terms of night-time respite.	<u>Complete</u> – The ANO notes that Airservices conducted a short-term validation study in Feb-Apr 2016, contrary to this recommendation, however it did provide an opportunity for clarifying the inequitable night-time respite consequences from the proposed southern departure path.
Recommendation 25: Airservices should set out the rationale behind the preferred runways and smart tracking changes implemented in Perth, including identifying the anticipated impacts in terms of aircraft movements and aircraft noise consequences, well ahead of the planned post-implementation review of these changes.	<u>Complete</u> – Airservices’ PIR TORs outlines the rationale behind the two changes, with the PIRs due to be completed in Sept 2016 (preferred runways) and Dec 2016 (smart tracking).