



Quarterly Report
April – June 2018

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1 Introduction

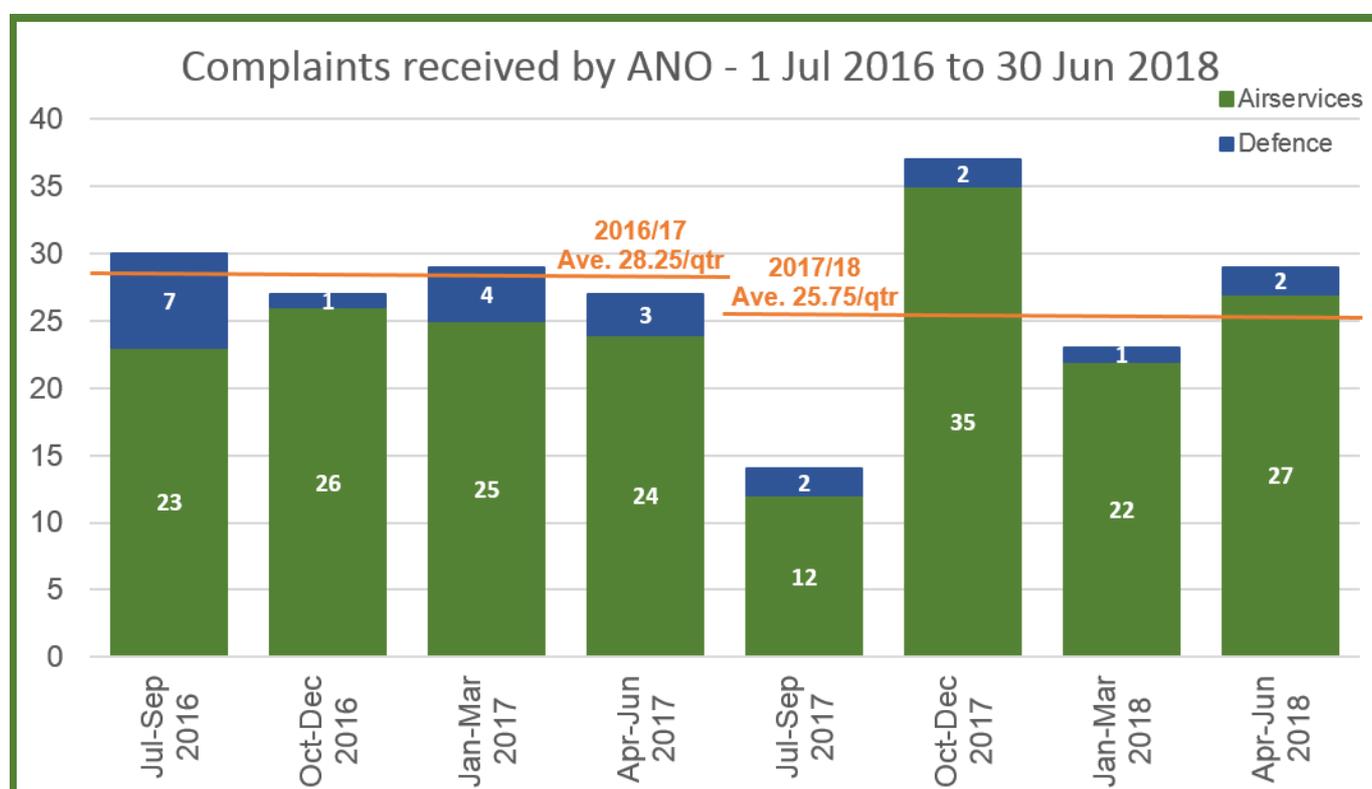
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the April to June 2018 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being the review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's and the Department of Defence's:
- a. complaint handling;
 - b. community consultation processes; and
 - c. provision of information about aircraft noise.

2 Overview

- 2.1 From the start of April to the end of June 2018, the ANO received a total of 29 complaints, including two about Defence's management of aircraft noise issues. **Attachment 1** provides detailed complaint statistics for the quarter.
- 2.2 The ANO's report following our *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart* was published in April 2018 and included thirteen recommendations aimed at improving Airservices' management of future flight path changes. Airservices accepted all recommendations and has already started to take actions to address these. At this stage, although Airservices has advised that action to address a number of recommendations is complete, the ANO is not yet in a position to close any of the recommendations. We continue to request information, to consider information provided by Airservices so far and to closely monitor Airservices' actions.
- 2.3 The ANO has closed all but one of the recommendations arising from our *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System* (submitted to Defence in November 2016). The remaining recommendation requires a website review and Defence has undertaken some work on this, but it remains incomplete.
- 2.4 **Attachment 2** provides a summary of action on all outstanding recommendations from both of the Reviews referred to above.

3 Complaint handling

3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 29 new complaints, two of which related to Defence's aircraft noise management. This is slightly above the quarterly average of last financial year, as shown in the graph below.



3.2 Forty-two complaints were closed during the quarter, of which 31 were reviewed in detail, and nine referred back to the relevant agency for a direct response. The remaining two complaints could not be reviewed: for one, the complainant did not provide requested information; for the other, the ANO assessed the complaint as being outside of the ANO Charter scope. At the end of the quarter, eleven complaints remained open.

3.3 Complaint statistics for the quarter are summarised at **Attachment 1**.

Noise improvement opportunities

3.4 Complaints reviewed by the ANO sometimes raise opportunities to improve noise outcomes. Sometimes a complainant will suggest a particular change which may in turn prompt consideration of additional options for improved outcomes. Generally, the practical opportunities for change arising from complaints received by the ANO are limited. This is due to it commonly being the case that there are no feasible, practical and safe alternatives available. In addition, Airservices and Defence may have already identified and implemented the available change opportunities.

3.5 However, even when no noise improvement can be achieved, the reflection on alternatives and provision of detailed and logical reasons for decisions not to pursue one or all of the alternatives considered promotes good decision-making. Occasionally, it highlights an opportunity that has not been fully explored.

3.6 The table below reports on the noise improvement opportunities that the ANO continues to pursue with Airservices and Defence, arising from ANO reviews of complaints about the agencies' complaint handling.

Complaint received by ANO	Description of initiative	Current status
June 2017	Perth: changes to northern smart tracking approach path to reduce noise impacts for residents	<p>This suggestion was first raised by residents prior to the new path being introduced in Sept 2015. At the time Airservices advised that the 12-month trial would be conducted with the path as designed and consideration of options to change the path would be part of the Post Implementation Review (PIR) process. The PIR report noted that "the Perth Aircraft Noise Technical Working Group will consider the input from...residents when reviewing the use and design of Smart Tracking during 2017". The ANO has recently reviewed some of the material already developed by Airservices for a potential alternative approach path, which will be consulted with relevant industry stakeholders ahead of possible community consultation later this year.</p> <p>The ANO was pleased to be able to verify that there has been significant activity on this issue, albeit over a protracted period.</p>
June 2017	Wagga Wagga: changes to circuit operations	<p>The ANO received a complaint about Airservices not being able to pursue any changes to reduce the noise impacts of frequent circuit training flights over residential areas to the north of the airfield. The ANO sought advice from the airport operator, Wagga Wagga Council, about whether the sparsely populated area to the south could be used more often, when practical. The stakeholders were responsive to the opportunity to reduce noise impacts and undertook to pursue a change to the circuit direction. The ANO continues to monitor this case until the change is implemented and will consider if there are any lessons for Airservices in the future handling of complaints such as this.</p>
February 2018	Wallan, Vic: changes to northern departure paths to reduce impacts on residential areas	<p>The ANO received a complaint about Airservices not being able to pursue any changes to reduce the noise impacts in the township of Wallan, some distance north of Melbourne Airport. The ANO sought an explanation of the advice and Airservices advised that: "Airservices has identified a potential noise improvement for the flight path that passes to the north of Wallan. However, Airservices has decided not to progress this, or to explore any other potential improvements that may exist, for the reasons set out". These reasons include the likely timing of any change in relation to airspace changes required for introduction of the new runway at Melbourne Airport, the low priority of the change due to the noise levels being considered by Airservices as "not in the high range", and Airservices' resource commitments for other work it deems to be of higher priority. While the ANO is disappointed that Airservices has decided to not pursue this potential noise improvement opportunity, we accept Airservices has made a reasoned decision considering the circumstances.</p>

Improving aircraft noise management

- 3.7 A key objective of the ANO's investigation of complaints about Defence's and Airservices' aircraft noise management is the identification of potential improvements to the agencies' aircraft noise-related practices. This includes complaint handling, community consultation and information provision. We do this through our review of decisions or actions in response to individual complaints, or as a single investigation in relation to multiple complaints such as our recent *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart*.
- 3.8 In the April to June quarter, we are reporting a total of 18 complaints closed with changes made by Airservices. Seventeen of these reflect changes made by Airservices in response to complaints arising from the flight path changes in Hobart and the ANO's recommendations. Another complaint related to a perceived lack of professionalism by an Airservices staff member handling a call and a lack of clarity about the escalation process for the complainant to follow. Airservices undertook a thorough, thoughtful and sensitive review of the issues, which led to sensible findings and appropriate actions to address the particular issues raised.
- 3.9 Another complaint during the quarter was closed with the Airport operator having adopted a change. This was a complaint that Airservices received initially and, after a detailed investigation, was unable to identify any changes it could pursue to reduce the impacts. Despite this, the Airport operator identified that it could restrict the activities that were of most concern to the community and this provided an effective noise improvement. The ANO acknowledges Gold Coast Airport's strong action in support of better community noise outcomes in this case.
- 3.10 Defence is also continuing to progress its response to the remaining recommendation from our *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System (November 2016)*. See **Attachment 2** for details. In addition, the ANO office conducted complaints management training with Defence staff located at RAAF Base Tindal during the quarter.

4 Consultation and Information Provision

- 4.1 The ANO has been closely monitoring Airservices' consultation activities, particularly in relation to its ongoing review of flight paths in Hobart and as it responds to the recommendations of the ANO's *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart*. Airservices has engaged external expertise, as per the ANO's recommendation, and conducted a series of consultation sessions in mid-June aimed at understanding the social impacts of the flight path changes introduced in September last year and amended in March this year. Airservices has advised that the social impact assessment will inform its airspace design review. In addition, feedback was sought at these sessions to assist in designing a Community Engagement Plan that will be used as the basis for consultation with a broader demographic when Airservices presents the initial findings of its airspace design review.
- 4.2 We are pleased to see Airservices taking positive actions to better engage with the Hobart community. We have provided our feedback to Airservices' management on some of the choices being made by Airservices in the course of this engagement and again urged Airservices to proactively foster open and responsive engagement with the Hobart community as it undertakes its airspace design review.
- 4.3 In our monitoring more broadly this quarter, the ANO office attended a number of stakeholder and community consultative meetings. This activity supports the ANO's role of monitoring Airservices' and Defence's consultation and information provision. It also fosters a broader understanding and awareness of the ANO's role and aircraft noise management issues.

Meetings attended included:

- Meeting with Western Sydney Airport representatives;
- Australian Mayoral Aviation Council annual conference;
- Hobart Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
- Australian Airports Association Ops-swap conference;
- Sydney Airport Implementation Monitoring Committee meeting;
- Ben Morton, MP;
- Government Aviation Complaint Handlers Forum; and
- Brisbane Airport briefing on New Parallel Runway project.

5 Closing remarks

- 5.1 The focal event of the quarter was receiving the formal response of the Board of Airservices to our *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart* and publishing our report together with Airservices' response. We are pleased that all recommendations have been accepted and Airservices is taking action to implement the recommendations. We will continue to closely monitor Airservices' actions in this regard and to provide feedback where we consider it warranted. Our quarterly reports will report on this ongoing monitoring and on our assessment of Airservices' progress against each of our recommendations.



Narelle Bell
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
31 July 2018

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Apr 2018	May 2018	Jun 2018	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	13	6	8	27
Complaints closed:	6	8	26	40
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	5	3	3	11
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	1	1
Outside charter scope	0	0	1	1
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	5	3	1	9
Total complaints closed - reviewed:	1	5	23	29
No change possible - explanation provided	1	4	5	10
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	1	17	18
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	1	1
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	0	0	0	0

DEFENCE	Apr 2018	May 2018	Jun 2018	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	1	1	0	2
Complaints closed:	0	2	0	2
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	0	0	0	0
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Defence to respond directly	0	0	0	0
Total complaints closed - reviewed:	0	2	0	2
No change possible - explanation provided	0	2	0	2
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	0

	Airservices	Defence	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 April 2018	23	1	24
Complaints received	27	2	29
Complaints closed	40	2	42
Complaints open at 1 July 2018	10	1	11

Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations

The following table sets out the status of outstanding recommendations made by the ANO and the ANO's assessment of action against each. Recommendations that were previously reported as complete have been removed.

Defence Complaints System Review (November 2016)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 3 – Defence should review the Defence Aircraft Noise web information and, taking account of comments in this report, make improvements to information provision, presentation and functionality.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Defence has advised that it has made some changes already, including launching its online complaint form. Defence is also reviewing the web information to address the issues identified in the review.</p>

Airservices - Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart (April 2018)

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 1: Airservices should incorporate consideration of potential noise impacts from the commencement of flight path design and integrate that consideration throughout the design process.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it has revised its National Operating Standard for the environmental management of flight path changes - it has amended its National ATS Administration Manual - it has delivered targeted training for all Airservices managers and staff involved in flight path change management, covering requirements for effective environmental assessment, community engagement and risk management. <p>The ANO is awaiting evidence to support Airservices' advice and to determine if the recommendation can be closed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Airservices should review its environmental assessment criteria to ensure they are appropriate as a quantitative measure for analysis against the EPBC Act requirements and for assessment of social impact.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is reviewing its environmental assessment referral criteria to ensure it is appropriate and aligned to the EPBC Act requirements and when complete will seek the advice of the Department of Environment. This review will be completed by June 2019; - it is also developing social impact criteria for aircraft noise management, to be completed December 2018.

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 3: Airservices should ensure that its additional analysis of social impact to form part of the Environmental Assessment:</p> <p>(a) includes a clearly defined purpose;</p> <p>(b) includes explicit commentary on social impact taking into account particular community history, context and sensitivities; and</p> <p>(c) incorporates a critically analytical assessment of the potential impact on the community of proposed change referring to both qualitative and quantitative values.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are ‘in progress’, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it has amended its Environmental Assessment template to document the more detailed social impact information required; - its subsequent stakeholder engagement plans will incorporate the appropriate social impact analysis and context; - it has contracted a social impact specialist firm to strengthen its community engagement planning; - this focus is already included in the re-engagement with Hobart stakeholders and the community. <p>Airservices’ work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: In undertaking its Environmental Assessments and preparing reports on those assessments, Airservices should:</p> <p>(a) ensure that all assessment criteria, for both EPBC Act purposes and for assessment of social impact, are clearly explained in its documentation in a way that makes clear their purpose, whether they are primary or secondary, the assessment methodology, and the consequences that follow if a threshold is exceeded;</p> <p>(b) explicitly document any assumptions made and explain the basis for each assumption;</p> <p>(c) explicitly document its consideration of change proposals against its stated criteria;</p> <p>(d) undertake a more nuanced assessment of whether a change is ‘significant’ in social impact or under the EPBC Act requirements, taking into account both quantitative and qualitative values so that a non-binary and more informative approach is taken to assessment against criteria; and</p> <p>(e) refer to or document all relevant information that forms the basis of its environmental assessment and conclusions in a single explanatory Environmental Assessment report.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are ‘in progress’, and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 3.</p> <p>Airservices’ work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 5: Airservices should access, through recruitment or otherwise, skilled and experienced subject matter expertise in the practice of community consultation. Leadership should give prominent support to this expertise so as to promote its influence and effect on Airservices' better performance in community consultation.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it has engaged a community engagement consultant; - it is conducting recruitment for a Group Community Engagement Manager who will be required to have community engagement experience and skills. Expected completion of this recruitment is Aug 2018; - external assistance may be sought on a case-by-case basis for other sensitive changes in the future.
<p>Recommendation 6: Airservices should abandon its stated policy of making the Community Aviation Consultation Groups the primary site of its community consultation and instead, with the input and leadership of a skilled practitioner of community engagement, develop a community consultation strategy and guidelines to inform individual detailed strategies for individual changes.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 5.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Airservices should develop a policy that, on those occasions when incorrect statements are made to the community or other stakeholders, it will acknowledge the error and remedy it.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken action that it considers addresses this recommendation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it already has in place a number of mechanisms, policies and procedures that provide guidance to staff on Airservices expectations of appropriate behaviour, conduct and performance; - Airservices is on the public record with regard to the inadequate community consultation at Hobart and has now put robust plans in place to re-engage with all Hobart stakeholders. <p>The ANO is seeking evidence of additional actions taken to ensure existing arrangements, policies and procedures that were already in place when the issues identified in our Review arose are followed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Airservices should ensure that, before deciding to propose a change and to commence to engage with a community about that change, it has acquainted itself with the context and recent history of that community and takes those matters into account, as far as practicable, in its decision making and in its engagement design.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are 'in progress', and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 3.</p> <p>Airservices' work to address this recommendation is expected to be completed in Q4-2018.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 9: Airservices should, as part of its community consultation activity, approach the assessments and other material on which it bases its consultations from a critically analytical perspective so as to ensure that all relevant matters have been considered and the information provided to the community is timely, correct, relevant, transparent, comprehensive, consistent and logically sound.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that its actions to address this recommendation are ‘complete’, and that its response is the same as for Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5.</p> <p>Given the interdependencies identified by Airservices, the ANO will await the evidence that supports closure of each of these recommendations before determining whether this supports closure of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: In its Hobart SIDS and STARS Review, Airservices should consult with the community well in advance of settling its findings and recommendations. Airservices should take immediate steps to obtain the community’s views on the most practical and effective ways to arrange this consultation.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Airservices has engaged a community engagement specialist to help engagement with the Hobart community in relation to its SIDS and STARS review; - It held a series of engagement sessions in mid-May 2018 focusing on how the community would like to be consulted. <p>The ANO is awaiting publication of the Community Engagement Strategy to see how the community’s views have been obtained, analysed and incorporated, before determining whether this recommendation can be closed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Where significant issues arise from complaints, Airservices should advise complainants and other stakeholders at the earliest possible stage of efforts being made, including investigation, to address concerns.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The experience at Hobart highlighted the need for Airservices’ staff to regularly familiarise themselves with existing policies and procedures, particularly if these policies have been refined or changed. Managers are having these conversations with their staff and identifying and initiating training needs as required. <p>The ANO notes that Airservices revised its Noise Complaints and Information Service procedures in April 2018 and is seeking to understand whether these procedural changes along with the identified training activities supports closure of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: Where Airservices identifies through complaints inconsistencies in information provided to residents and other stakeholders, Airservices should take early action to correct information given.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, and that its response is the same as for Recommendation 7.</p>

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 13: Airservices should not preempt the outcome of internal investigations in its responses to complaints by advising complainants that there is unlikely to be any change.</p>	<p><u>Ongoing</u> – Airservices has advised that it has taken a number of actions that it considers address this recommendation, and that its response is the same as for Recommendations 7 and 11.</p>