



Quarterly Report
January – March 2018

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Overview	1
3	Complaint handling.....	2
4	Consultation and Information Provision	4
5	Closing remarks	4
	Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics.....	5
	Attachment 2 Outstanding ANO recommendations.....	6

1 Introduction

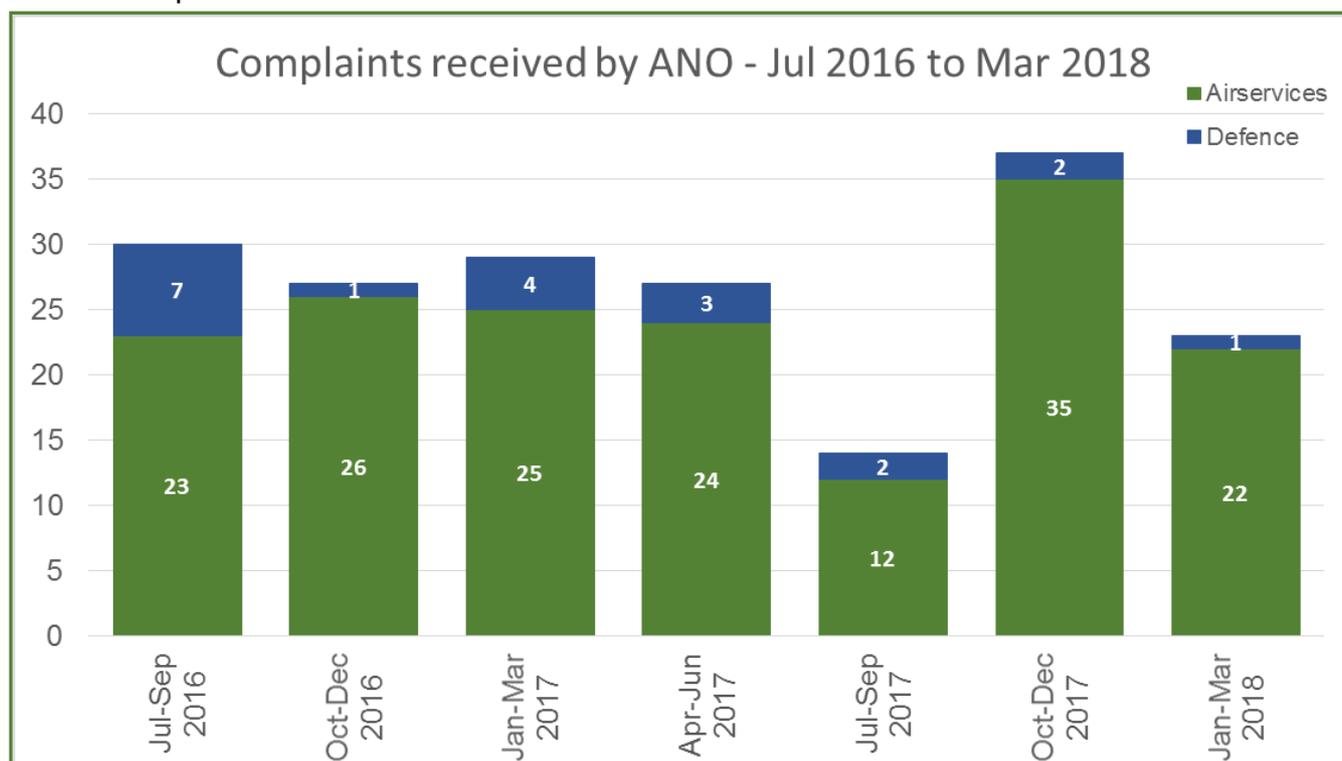
- 1.1 This report includes complaint statistics and a summary of ANO activities during the January to March 2018 quarter. It is structured around the three key functions of the ANO, these being the review and monitoring of Airservices Australia's and the Department of Defence's:
- a. complaint handling;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

2 Overview

- 2.1 From the start of January to the end of March, the ANO received a total of 23 complaints, including one about Defence's management of aircraft noise issues.
- 2.2 As previously reported, the ANO has conducted a review of aspects of Airservices' introduction of flight path changes in Hobart in mid-September 2017. The ANO's report has been submitted to the Airservices Board. In early April Airservices' Chairman met with the ANO and indicated that the Board agrees in principle with the thirteen recommendations made in the report. In line with the ANO Charter, the report will be published on the ANO website once we receive the Board's formal response.
- 2.3 The ANO is pleased to report substantial progress in the past quarter by Defence in response to the ANO's *Review of Defence's Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System*. The report, submitted to Defence in November 2016, made seven recommendations, all of which were accepted by Defence. On the basis of evidence supplied by Defence demonstrating updated procedures and systems for better aircraft noise complaint management, the ANO has now closed all but one of the recommendations. **Attachment 2** provides a summary of action on the recommendations that were not closed at the start of January.
- 2.4 In February 2018, the review of the ANO's governance and resourcing arrangements, which was initiated in October by the Airservices Board, was completed, making four recommendations. The ANO is working with Airservices' CEO and relevant Board members to implement the recommendations.

3 Complaint handling

- 3.1 During the quarter the ANO received 23 new complaints, one of which related to Defence's aircraft noise management. This is slightly below the quarterly average of last financial year. Nineteen complaints were closed during the quarter, of which 9 were reviewed in detail, and 10 referred back to the relevant agency for a direct response. At the end of the quarter, 23 complaints remained open.



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

Noise improvement opportunities

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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
Nov 2016	Pallarenda: ATC procedure changes to reduce overflight of residential areas	<p>In response to a complaint, the ANO requested that Defence consider options for reducing noise from overflights for residents in the Pallarenda area north of RAAF Base Townsville.</p> <p>Defence has since introduced new departure procedures to reduce overflight of the Pallarenda community. To further reduce noise impacts for residents, practice engine failures are no longer permitted in the area north – north-west of the main runway. The ANO is pleased with these initiatives and has now finalised the case after the results of longer term monitoring demonstrated a significant reduction in the number of overflights of Pallarenda.</p>
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>

Improving aircraft noise management

- 3.6 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*, which will be made public soon.
- 3.7 Defence is also continuing to progress actions in response to the recommendations made in the ANO’s *Review of Defence’s Aircraft Noise Complaints Management System (November 2016)*. All but one of the recommendation is now closed (see **Attachment 2** for details).

4 Consultation and Information Provision

- 4.1 The key consultation issue for the ANO during this quarter has continued to be in relation to Airservices' management of its flight path changes in Hobart and the subsequent review that has since been initiated. Our Review and its recommendations address this up to a point. However, we intend to continue to closely monitor the ongoing engagement activities of Airservices in relation to its longer-term Hobart Review.
- 4.2 During the quarter, the ANO office attended a number of industry 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 aircraft noise management issues.
- Meetings attended included:
- Meeting with Perth Airport representatives;
 - Government Aviation Complaint Handlers Forum;
 - Hobart Community Aviation and Consultation Group meeting;
 - Meeting with Australian Airports Association Board members;
 - Williamstown Advisory Group meeting; and
 - Susan Templeman, MP.
- 4.3 The ANO also delivered complaints management training at RAAF Base East Sale and presented at two workshops held by Airservices for its representatives who attend Community Aviation Consultation Group meetings on behalf of Airservices. The ANO highlighted the value of effective community engagement, provided examples of good practice identified during our monitoring activities at CACGs and highlighted opportunities arising from our reviews of complaints about Airservices' community consultation.

5 Closing remarks

- 5.1 I am pleased to see that the work Defence has been pursuing in response to our Complaints System Review has delivered tangible outcomes, and we have now closed most of the recommendations we made. We are also heartened by Defence's constructive approach to identifying potential improvements in how it manages aircraft noise and responds to emerging issues.
- 5.2 I look forward to receiving the formal response of the Board of Airservices to our report on our *Investigation into complaints about the introduction of new flight paths in Hobart* and to publishing our report together with Airservices' response.



Narelle Bell
Aircraft Noise Ombudsman
19 April 2018

Attachment 1 Complaint Statistics

The following tables summarise the complaint statistics for the quarter.

AIRSERVICES	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	5	12	5	22
Complaints closed:	5	11	3	19
Total complaints closed - not reviewed:	1	6	3	10
Complainant did not provide further information	0	0	0	0
Outside charter scope	0	0	0	0
Referred to Airservices to respond directly	1	6	3	10
Total complaints closed - reviewed:	4	5	0	9
No change possible - explanation provided	4	5	0	9
Change adopted by Airservices Australia	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Airport operator	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Aircraft operator	0	0	0	0

DEFENCE	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018	Total for quarter
Complaints received:	0	0	1	1
Complaints closed:	0	0	0	0
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	0	0	0
No change possible - explanation provided	0	0	0	0
Change adopted by Defence	0	0	0	0

	Airservices	Defence	Total
Complaints carried forward on 1 Jan 2018	19	0	19
Complaints received	22	1	23
Complaints closed	19	0	19
Complaints open at 1 April 2018	22	1	23

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 1 – Defence should expand the focus of complaint investigation beyond compliance checking to also identify and pursue opportunities for noise improvements, improved community engagement and better public information.</p>	<p><u>Completed</u> – Defence has updated its complaint tracking form (OA39 form) to include additional fields for identifying and documenting considerations of improvement opportunities.</p>
<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>
<p>Recommendation 4 – To support the timely release of written responses, Defence should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> document the procedures to be followed in the event of written complaints (whether received through post, email or an online form), ensuring such procedures incorporate a timely acknowledgement of the complaint streamline any necessary review and approval processes for written responses to complaints <p>consider the provision of training and support material for staff that will be responding to complaints, in particular via email following the introduction of electronic complaint submission.</p>	<p><u>Completed</u> – Defence has advised that current procedures for complaint responses do not differentiate by lodgement method. Review and approval processes for release of written responses to complaints are aligned with normal Base procedures for external communications. Bases are obtaining complaint handling training from the ANO for personnel who deal with noise complaints to improve complaint handling across all complaint types. A shared complaint register enables Bases to draw on the responses of others to help develop their own.</p>
<p>c. Recommendation 5 – Defence should adhere to its existing requirements for complaint recording and tracking.</p>	<p><u>Completed</u> – Defence has updated the Air Command Aircraft Noise Management Standing Instruction and established a centralised register for complaint recording and tracking to help monitor compliance with existing requirements.</p>

Continued over page

Ongoing recommendations	ANO assessment of agency response
<p>Recommendation 6 – Defence should update its localised recording systems and the OA39 form as appropriate to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Closing date b. A place to record consideration of noise improvement opportunities, community engagement improvements and public information improvements c. Undertakings or follow up action required (including who is accountable for delivery). d. A mechanism for tracking any undertakings or follow up actions through to completion. 	<p><u>Completed</u> – Defence has updated its complaint tracking form (OA39 form) to include additional fields for identifying and documenting the requirements of this recommendation. It has also established a centralised register for complaint recording and tracking as a mechanism for tracking any undertakings of follow up actions arising from complaints.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 – Defence should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ensure that complaints not readily ascribed to a base are managed as effectively as other complaints b. share data, experience and learnings across bases to maximise noise improvement opportunities and enhance complaint management across Defence. 	<p><u>Completed</u> – Defence has established a procedure for handling complaints not readily ascribed to a base and a centralised register for noise complaints to enhance the sharing of data, experience and learnings.</p>